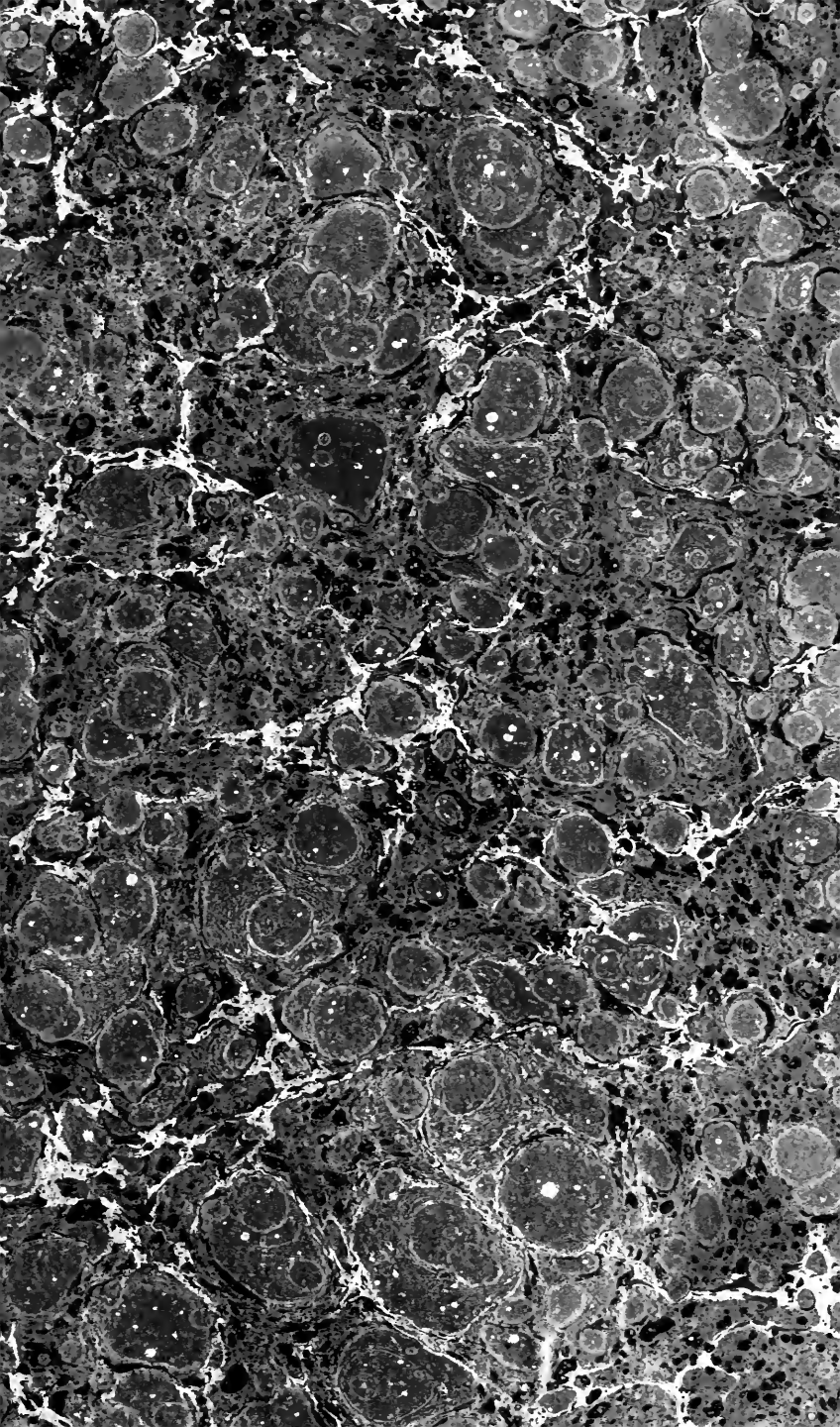

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SERMONS.

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SERMONS.

BY

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INTRODUCTION.

THE Sermons in this volume, although mostly preached before a peculiar congregation, will yet be found to relate to many questions of universal interest, and to contain views not adapted, in many instances, to one age more than to another. They embrace most of the great points of a Christian life: and they will be followed, I hope, in a few weeks, by another volume, of which the particular object will be the Illustration of the Scriptures; either by explaining certain passages or portions of the Sacred Volume, or by stating some general rules of interpretation which may apply to the whole of it.

Meantime, it would be affectation, were I to dissemble my knowledge that these volumes will be received in many quarters with a strong prejudice against them. I cannot regret this as far as regards the followers of a party; to such, be the party what it may, I cannot wish to write acceptably. But for those who are not tied to any party, who love truth and goodness for their own

sakes, and who are willing to think for themselves, I should greatly grieve if they were to be prevented by any prejudice from reading fairly and confidently what they will find in these volumes. Above all, let no sincere Christian be disturbed by the fear of finding any thing in them low in principle or in feeling, any thing deserving the name of latitudinarian. He will find in them every Christian truth and every Christian virtue enforced with no qualifying or hesitating spirit. He will find no argument used which the writer did not himself believe; no disproof of any statement suppressed which was within the writer's own knowledge. The only latitudinarianism to be met with in these Sermons, is a kind of which St. Paul has set the example. I have earnestly laboured to destroy that unchristian superstition, which, as a necessary consequence of its straining at the gnat, for ever swallows the camel. I have wished to inculcate Christian unity, the unity of the Spirit; and therefore have condemned that craving for unity of opinion and of form by which the true unity is rendered impossible. I have endeavoured to assert the authority of Law, which Fanaticism and Jacobinism are alike combining to destroy. I have upheld one standard and one authority in all moral points; namely, the law of God; and one standard and one authority in all points of form and order; namely, the law of man:

the first of these infallible and eternal; the second fallible and changeable; but both having an absolute claim in their respective departments to the implicit obedience of individuals.

It would also give me much concern if, because it is my fortune to oppose the stream of party opinion, I should be regarded as one who followed merely my own individual notions, ignorant or careless of the wisdom and experience of other men, whether past or present. It would be, indeed, a strong presumption against any man's understanding, if he did not venerate and listen to the wisdom of those great men whom God has raised up at different times as the intellectual lights of the world. But it has been my comfort to think, that all these, so far as I have been able to study them, have received for many years the constant tribute of my admiration; that my mind has never been suffered to want their guidance and their instruction. And if in any principle, or in the application of any principle when the circumstances were similar, I should be found to differ from these really great authorities, it would be to me as much a matter of surprise as of regret. Unhappily these great men are not numerous, and the mass of writers on all subjects are naturally of a very different description. And although this has not happened especially in theology; for the multitude of ordinary historians or biographers, or writers of travels, is as great in

proportion as that of ordinary divines; yet there is a reason why such writers are in theology particularly worthless. Where facts are to be communicated, a man of very moderate powers, if he happens to have had access to sources of information not generally accessible, can tell us much which it is well worth our while to read. But in interpreting the writings of others, in carrying on processes of reasoning, in discussing questions of practice, in analysing human nature; in all those matters which are the common province of the theologian, the salt that has lost its savour is not more unprofitable than the writings of a feeble or prejudiced mind. And therefore it may be perfectly consistent with a very sincere reverence for the authority of great men to attach but little respect to a large proportion of what is called Divinity.

No words have ever so well described the true excellence of a theologian as our Lord's own comparison. "Every scribe instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, is like unto a householder who bringeth out of his treasure things new and old." Standing, as St. Paul expresses it, in the position of one who judges all things, the pre-eminent greatness of his task requires a cultivation of mind proportionably pre-eminent. His business is twofold, the interpretation of the Scriptures, and the application of them. The first is a matter of criticism and philology: and every work that increases

our knowledge of the languages in which the Scriptures were written; that assists us to fix the age and circumstances of the authors of the several books; or that throws light on the state of their times, in all its various divisions, is the proper study of a theologian with regard to this first part of his duty. But the second part of it, the application of the Scriptures, opens to him a still wider field. For this a complete knowledge of his own times is wanting; and such a knowledge is impossible without a knowledge of former times also; the great events, if I may so speak, in the moral and intellectual, no less than in the political history of the human race; the great vicissitudes of opinion, the great influences upon morals, the great social changes which have been affected by or have affected both; these, together with the general constitution of the human mind and character, such as it exists in all ages, are the magnificent subjects which he should study who really aspires to the name of a great theologian.

With respect to the first division of a theologian's studies, the interpretation of the Scriptures, I shall reserve what I have to say for another occasion. On the second division, the application of the Scriptures, it may not be amiss to add a few observations now. I suppose that the Scriptures themselves are constantly studied, and that the student is careful meanwhile to keep himself

in a healthy condition morally, by cultivating his religious and his charitable affections; the first by the exercises of devotion, prayer, and meditation, and by reading works of a directly practical character[a]: the second by habitual intercourse with the poor. It is needless to say, that without this no merely intellectual study will be likely to bring forth its proper fruits. But suppose these points to be carefully attended to, and let us imagine a young man, after having taken his degree of Bachelor of Arts, commencing his professional studies previously to his ordination. Now in addition to his scriptural studies, which are to furnish him with his principles of teaching and acting, he wants to learn how to apply these principles for the benefit of his own generation. He is destined to lead a life eminently active, to be thrown amongst his brethren without any more particular occupation than that of promoting their good in every way, temporal and spiritual. It is manifest, therefore, that he ought fully to understand the nature of that society which he is to endeavour to influence: the relations of its several

[a] I mean such works as Bishop Wilson's most admirable "Maxims," and "Sacra Privata," Taylor's "Holy Living and Dying," and many others of the same class. I should rank with them Pascal's "*Pensées*," if I did not consider it to belong also to a class of works separately noticed elsewhere "the master works of human genius."

parts to one another; what may have disordered those relations; the views which the several classes entertained of each other and of themselves; and how far these are founded on prejudice or on truth. The irritation against their richer neighbours, which he will often find prevailing in the minds of the poor, renders it expedient that he should be acquainted with the elements, at least, of political economy; so as to explain to the poor the true causes of their difficulties on the one hand, and their only possible remedies on the other. The existence of religious dissent, combined as it often is with political party feelings, makes it fitting that he should well understand the history of his own country, in the true sense of the term. This knowledge is not to be gained by reading what is called ecclesiastical history only; for works of this sort, even when they are not the mere statement of one sect or faction, are yet too limited in their range to give a comprehensive view of the whole subject; but by reading ecclesiastical and civil history together, and by so endeavouring to obtain a clear knowledge of the several parties and sects in their complex character, part political and part religious, and to understand which of these two elements has predominated, and how it has acted upon the other. But the parties of English history are not original in England;—both in religious matters and political they run up into divisions far more

universal, and belong to questions which have agitated mankind since the first beginnings of political society. And here is the enduring value of the great philosophers and historians of Greece and Rome; that with a perfect abstraction from those particular names and associations which are for ever biassing our judgment in modern and domestic instances, the great principles of all political questions, whether civil or ecclesiastical, are perfectly discussed and illustrated, with entire freedom, with most attractive eloquence, and with profoundest wisdom. By the perpetual study of Thucydides and Tacitus, of Plato and Cicero, and above all, of the ethics and politics of Aristotle, a man's mind is kept fresh and comprehensive, and he may follow up English history with the spirit of a philosopher, not the narrow-minded zeal of a partisan.

In the works of these great men, the skeleton as it were of civil society, the true form of its parts, their simplest relations to one another, and by what means those relations are disordered and preserved, may be most clearly perceived. But our society derives its immediate growth from the chaos of the middle ages, and there we must trace out the source of its peculiar evils. The main use of ecclesiastical history is thus to be obtained from studying it analytically; from following upwards those evil currents of neglect, of uncharitableness,

and of ignorance, whose full streams we find now so pestilent. We thus arrive at the pretended conversion of the barbarians; an event of immense importance, as explaining the more confirmed separation of the clergy and laity in modern times, and the incomplete influence which Christianity has exercised upon the institutions even of Christian countries. But the barbarians found the Roman world in no healthy state; and Christianity had shared in the general corruption. Social helplessness, and intellectual frivolousness, had long characterised the state of society; the first derivable in the eastern provinces from a period earlier than the Roman conquest, but encouraged and heightened alike under the proconsular and imperial governments: the other to be traced to a still older date, and connected with more complicated causes; the showiness of ancient literature, calculated, owing to the dearness of books, for recitation to a number rather than for solitary reading; the unavoidable difficulties which obstructed the path of physical inquiry;—the artificial difficulties opposed under a despotic system to the prosecution of political science; and the undue concentration of men's attention from those causes upon rhetoric and metaphysics—studies indispensable in an active state of society, when physical and social inquiries are pursued with vigour—studies which we are unwisely neglecting, whilst all our danger lies the

other way,—but which are wholly unfit to be the sole or principal intellectual food of our nature, unfit to be followed for their own sake, but most useful as a guide and strengthener of our minds for more practical and particular inquiries; ennobling when they withdraw us from the exclusive dominion of Utilitarianism, but enfeebling and paralysing when they injure practical wisdom, and turn us from Christians and citizens into disputants about words and abstractions. These two evils then of the Roman world, social helplessness and intellectual frivolousness, infected the Christian church from its earliest period, and have been the principal causes of the abandonment by the church of its own government, and leaving it in the hands of the clergy; and of those fatal strifes of words, which, whatever was the proportion of error on the side of the respective disputants, were in themselves, and in the very fact of their agitation, a corruption of the simplicity of Christian faith.

But while the student is thus engaged, there is great need that he should keep his spirit and his intellect continually refreshed, by constant recourse to the great springs of truth, divine and human. It is a perilous employment for any man to be perpetually contemplating narrow-mindedness and weakness in conjunction with much of piety and goodness. It is perilous either to his understand-

ing or his faith, according as the moral or intellectual part of his own nature may happen to be predominant. And therefore let all who study ecclesiastical history, or the mass of ecclesiastical writers, preserve a lively knowledge of the Scriptures on the one hand, and of the master works of human wisdom on the other. Both these are alike necessary: for if the Scriptures had been sufficient, we should not have had Milner and other writers of that party; if the greatest works of human wisdom had been sufficient without the Scriptures, we should not have had Gibbon. Both are necessary,—I am not now speaking of moral improvement, but of the understanding's perception of truth;—the Scriptures, to remind us without ceasing that Christianity in itself is wholly free from the foolishness thrown around it by some of its professors; the great works of human genius, to save us from viewing the Scriptures themselves through the medium of ignorance and prejudice, and lowering them by our perverse interpretations, in order to make them countenance our errors.

Some perhaps even now may object to the notion that human wisdom can enable us to interpret God's Word. I need not quote here the various texts of Scripture which are commonly brought forward to support this objection; and which, forced as they are from their real meaning, confirm

the statement which they are supposed to confute. Undoubtedly no bad man, no careless liver, is likely, by the mere aids of criticism or intellectual ability, to enter into the full meaning of the Scriptures. But I have been all along supposing the case not of a bad or careless man, but of a Christian student, desirous to use every means which God has given him in order to arrive at the truth as it is in Christ. Is such an one the better or the holier for letting his understanding grow feeble for want of exercise, or is a good man's folly more likely to discover truth than his wisdom? The great fault in the writings of that party who are supposed to attach the least value to what they call profane learning, appears to me to consist in their frequent misquotations and misinterpretations of Scripture; they can quote detached texts, but are by no means remarkable for a comprehensive view of large portions of the Sacred Volume taken together; and with the very best intentions they interpret St. Paul no better than they would interpret Aristotle, and for the same reason: because they do not sufficiently exercise and cultivate their minds to become masters of the meaning of a profound and difficult writer.

The course of theological study which I have here suggested, and which seems to follow naturally from the two divisions of a Christian minister's business, the interpretation and application of the

Scriptures, would, I am sure, amply repay any individual who would resolve to make trial of it. It seems to me exactly to answer to the office of the Christian minister. For as a minister should be a more perfect specimen of the Christian character, so the course of study here recommended is only a more perfect Christian education; carrying on to a greater proficiency that knowledge which in a lower degree is essential to every Christian, the knowledge of the Scriptures, and of the common duties and relations of life. It is an education indeed which no man will ever exhaust; but as the very lowest elements of it are valuable, so in proportion as we advance in it, shall we find ourselves wiser both theoretically and practically; the play of our minds will be freer and more active, their grasp stronger and more comprehensive, their thoughts more lively and beautiful, their knowledge fuller, their judgment more accurate. Nor let it be said that it is out of the reach of an ordinary student; as requiring too much time and labour. Let those who say so look at the lists of books that are actually recommended from authority to young men preparing themselves for orders. And these lists being mostly confined to what is called Divinity, suppose that a man will provide himself over and above with that common knowledge which the state of the times and the ordinary demand of society renders necessary. But I would

have him regard this common knowledge as one great branch of his professional studies; for such the comprehensive character of his profession justly makes it. I would have him turn to a definite account knowledge which he now picks up carelessly, and often leaves undigested; I would have him master of those subjects upon which all not only talk but act, and on which it is to be desired that some at least should be able to talk and act sensibly. I would have him never lay aside the greatest works of human genius, of whatever age or country; they are not so numerous as to overwhelm him; and whatever be his particular studies, some of these, whether philosophers, poets, or historians, should be always on his table, and daily in his hand, till his mind, catching a portion of their excellence, is able to work with tenfold power upon whatever subjects he may submit to it. And if for these great instructors, he be content to leave unopened many of the volumes which are now thought so essential to theological learning, let him not be afraid of the results of his exchange. Always supposing as the foundation a constant, critical, and devout study of the Scriptures themselves, and the use of those philological and antiquarian works which are essential, and alone essential, to the understanding of them; he will find that in the comparison of human works, both spiritually and intellectually, the works of the

greatest minds will be most useful to him; that he may be well content to be ignorant even of Bull and Pearson, if he is thus enabled to become more intimately familiar with Bacon and Aristotle.

There is however one branch of study which deserves especially to be recommended, as not only forming a most valuable part of church history, but as amounting almost to a devotional exercise at the same time; I mean the biography of good Christians of all ages[a]; and above all, whenever it

[a] Would it not be possible and desirable to make more use than Protestants have commonly done of the ancient Christian biographies, known by the name of the Lives of the Saints? I profess to know only a few specimens of these; but it could not be difficult, I should imagine, to select a sufficient number, wholly unexceptionable, and which would unite the interest of tales of heroic action and suffering with sound Christian edification. I should not object to retaining the miracles in these narratives, provided there was nothing grotesque or profane in them; for it might be stated in the preface that they were rather stories with a foundation in fact, than perfectly true in all their details. But they would, at any rate, show the feelings of the times in which they were written; and they would help to fill up that wide chasm in our Christian sympathies which extends with many almost from the apostles to Luther; with no objects of interest in this long interval, except the churches of the Vaudois, and a few individuals who may have denounced the abuses of Popery. Whereas hundreds of good men are recorded in the Lives of the Saints, who well deserve, like Boromeo and Pascal at a later period, to be ranked with the truest members of our Christian brotherhood; and in whose

is to be obtained, their own expression of their spiritual wants and affections, and the record of their deaths. It is not desirable to think that error is truth, or foolishness wisdom, because a good man has uttered it. But it is even less desirable that our sense of his errors or foolishness should destroy our sympathy with his goodness. The pursuit of ecclesiastical history will necessarily show us too much of the quarrels and infirmities of Christians; it is most wholesome to turn to a picture which will display their union and their strength. And in those portions of good men's lives which exhibit them in their direct relations towards God, opening their hearts before him, convinced of their own sin and of his mercy in Christ, showing the true marks of Christ's servants, a quick and tender conscience, and an entire trust in God; we see in all ages, and in all countries, the true unity of Christ's Spirit, the true agreement of Christ's people. Or again, if in the lives and writings of Christians we have found too many marks of human weakness, marks which show that they still are surrounded with this world's infirmities; yet how delightful is it to watch them in their deaths, when being delivered from their several tempations, their lamps are seen to burn with the same heavenly brilliance, inasmuch as all are

sufferings and active holiness we might find a support and example for ourselves.

fed by the same oil. There the weak mind has parted with its weakness, the angry with its over vehemence; there the narrow-minded learns the largeness of God's love, and the understanding, which perhaps had felt too keen a consciousness of its power, is softened by the overwhelming sense of God's perfections now more clearly discerned. So in all Christ is glorified, and we can perceive even here the beginnings of that perfect communion, in which all shades of difference being melted away, Christ's servants will be one for ever in him and in the Father.

These remarks have run out to a greater length than I had intended, yet I cannot think them unseasonable. That theological education in England is in an imperfect state at present is generally allowed, and various plans have been suggested for its improvement. But the evil appears to me to be too deeply seated to be removed by a more effective execution merely of the present system; the system itself is faulty, leaving out much that is essential, requiring much that is needless. Far too little attention has been paid to the complete interpretation of the Scriptures on the one hand, and to the studies required for the actual application of them on the other; far too much stress has been laid upon an acquaintance with the works of theologians who have written on points of controversy between Christians and Christians,

or who have laboured to erect systems of dogmatical divinity. It is not enough considered, that the great matter of Christianity, the way of saving souls, must be learnt from the Scriptures alone; and that by getting at a full understanding of them we are getting at the only means of discovering Christian truth. Now if, after we have employed our utmost pains on the right understanding of the Scripture, there remain any doctrines fairly disputable, any practices the advocates or opponents of which equally can appeal to Scripture as justifying or condemning them; then we may be sure that those doctrines and practices are really unessential and indifferent, and that every man must be content with holding his own opinion about them, in perfect tolerance of the opposite opinion entertained by his neighbour. If this be not so, and if the sense of the Scriptures as to any important point may fairly be doubted by honest and sensible men, it seems to me no better than a mockery to call them the rule of faith; and it is imputing an obscurity to God's revelation, such as attaches to the works of no philosopher, and no human legislator; for where is the philosopher whose main principles are not to be clearly made out by his own disciples? where is the law whose main enactments are differently interpreted by those who honestly study them? But men, in their zeal for their

own articles of faith, have insisted on their necessity in the first place; and then, if these cannot be proved beyond dispute from Scripture, they call in tradition or the voice of antiquity to assist in establishing their truth. This is done by the Roman Catholics boldly and consistently; by Protestants it is insinuated awkwardly, and in contradiction to their own great distinguishing tenet, that Scripture is the only authority in matters of revelation. Whereas the true way of reasoning reverses this order; it assumes nothing beforehand as to the necessity of this or that doctrine, but examines carefully the view of Christianity which God himself has given. What it finds prominently enforced in this, it considers as essential; what it finds clearly stated in it, it regards as certain; but what is noticed indirectly, or not so clearly as to prevent fair differences of interpretation, it regards as unessential and undetermined, as a means of trying men's love of truth together with their charity; their love of truth, in endeavouring to arrive at a probable conclusion for themselves as to the mind of the Spirit; their charity, in not presuming to force their own conclusions on others, not condemning them for concluding differently.

I leave it to those who think that by following this method we should sacrifice any essential point of Christian faith, to consider whether their faith

stands upon the authority of God or of men. But for myself, I am fully convinced that a representation of Christianity, drawn solely from a faithful and sensible interpretation of the Scriptures, would abundantly justify the wisdom of God; and while it put aside the presumption of much of our actual theology, would set forth Christ crucified with power, and would lead Christ's people to a more perfect holding of the truth in love.

Rugby, November, 1834.

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SERMON I.

CHRIST OUR FRIEND.

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The love of Christ constraineth us.

There can be but little wanting to the happiness of any person who can, with sincerity, say that these words describe the habitual state of his own mind. It is possible that faith, the deepest and liveliest faith in the excellence and worthiness of Christ, may be so mixed with fears for our own unworthiness that we may not taste fully the comfort of Christ's Spirit. But he who is constantly constrained by the love of Christ, who leaves evil things undone, who does good things actively, because his sense of Christ's love is ever present with him, will feel what St. John expresses, no doubt from the experience of his own heart, that "perfect love casteth out fear, be-

cause fear hath torment." And with this love so strong in him, there is an end at once of all unhappiness. There is no need of giving him comfort, let his earthly troubles be as great as they will; for he has that in him which will make him more than patient; which puts him already half in heaven. His love shows that his sins are forgiven, for no one can love God thoroughly who feels himself guilty in his sight, and fears lest he should be unpardoned; and with the sense of sin and condemnation thus destroyed, death has lost its sting, and he lives and will live for evermore, because he belongs to God.

On the other hand, St. Paul says also, in the first Epistle to the Corinthians, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema." These words are not to be strained harshly, as if all those were shut out from God's covenant whose fear surpassed their love. But where there is no love at all, there commonly is no fear either, and such are the persons against whom God's judgment is threatened. There is no fear in their common way of living, while they are well and comfortable; but when any thing makes them think of death, then they are afraid, and their fear then is of no use to them. But for those who fear God constantly when they are in health, it is certain that they must love him also; and it is rather their misfortune than their fault that they do not

feel more happy in their love. However, the more common case, I am afraid, is theirs who neither fear much nor love much; to whom the words of the text express a feeling altogether strange,—they know not what it is to be constrained by the love of Christ.

We know and understand a great many motives, some leading to good and others to evil, and some leading partly to one and partly to the other. We know what it is to please ourselves, we know also (none is so vile as not to know it) what it is to please others; we know the pleasure of being praised, of being honoured, of being esteemed, of being loved; we know what it is to be constrained by the love of amusement, and many of us also know what it is to be constrained by the love of knowledge; or, at least, of the distinction which knowledge brings with it. These feelings act upon our minds, and influence our characters, but the constraining power of the love of Christ is a motive which we read of in the New Testament, we read of it also in the lives of martyrs or of missionaries; but what it is from our own experience there are too many of us who know nothing at all, who can perhaps hardly conceive themselves so changed as that they should know it.

Yet the facts which should naturally excite this love are all known to them. They know what this week celebrates; there is no part of the story

of our Lord's sufferings with which their ears are not familiar. They have heard and read often even of his agony in the garden of Gethsemane,—even of his exclaiming on the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Nor have any more particulars been known to good men of old than are now known to us. Go back as far as we will, approach as closely to the time of our Lord's appearing on earth as our existing records will allow, still we can trace no fuller knowledge of the facts of our Lord's sufferings and death than we can all gain—than we have actually gained from the four Gospels now in our possession. That story which we know so well, but feel so little, is precisely the same which constrained so many of God's servants in different ages, which constrains so many at this moment, to count all things but loss for Christ's sake, to govern their whole lives and thoughts by the principle of love and gratitude to their Saviour. The difference is assuredly not in our knowledge but in ourselves—that which has been the very bread of life to others is to us tasteless, weak, and ineffectual.

Yet, although it is true that we have the facts of our Lord's sufferings before us, as well as those of his life; and though we may, in one sense, be said to have the knowledge of them, yet we still labour under a strange ignorance respecting them; we have not, it is to be feared, brought them home

to ourselves, and fully digested them. We still are apt to say in our hearts, "Who shall ascend into heaven, or who shall descend into the grave?" or, in other words, we connect the thought of our Lord only with heaven, which is far above out of our sight; or with death, which we strive to keep out of our minds so long as we can. We do not enough consider that the word is nigh us, in our mouths, and in our hearts; that it is *now*, whilst we are in this world, whilst we are talking and thinking and acting in our various ways, that Christ offers himself to us as our Saviour. We do not enough value nor understand the extent of his mercy in coming upon earth to live with us, as well as to die for us. We do not enough remember that he was, in all points, tempted like as we are. Nay, although the wisdom of God has hidden from us the particulars of our Lord's early life, to prevent, perhaps, many superstitions; yet that he was a child, that he was young, and knew the thoughts and feelings of boyhood no less than those of manhood, is a thing which we ought not to forget, nor omit to turn it to our benefit. Men forget what they were in their youth, or at best only partially remember it: it is hard, even for those whose memory is strongest and most lively, to put themselves exactly into the same position in which they stood as boys; they can scarcely fancy that there was once a time when they cared

so much for pleasures and troubles which now seem so trifling. And it may be, that if we rise hereafter to angels' stature; if wisdom be ours such as now we dream not of; if being counted worthy to know God as he is, the poorness of all created pleasures shall be revealed to us, flashing upon our awakened spirits like light, it may be that we shall then feel it as hard to fancy how we could have cared for what we now deem most important; how twenty years, more or less, taken from this span of our earthly life; how being parted for a few years, more or less, from those friends with whom we are now united for ever; how this could have seemed of any importance to beings born for immortality. It is quite reasonable to suppose that the interests of manhood will hereafter appear to us just as insignificant,—I ought rather to say, ten thousand times more so, than the interests of our boyish years can seem to us now. We forget,—and to all minds short of God's the past must something fade away ere the present can fully possess them. But with Him, who is the First and the Last, it is not so,—to him all things are present, and nothing is despised. Surely there is something for the youngest child to think of with comfort, when he recollects how Jesus, far from turning children away from him, "took them up in his arms, and laid his hands upon them, and blessed them." Or was it for no-

thing that it was recorded, or are we merely to say, coldly, that this was a beautiful instance of Christ's meekness and humility, and so dismiss it from our thoughts as a fact of history? It was a proof of his meekness and humility, but it is so still; he changes not, but is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; and the value of this proof of his love is not to show us what he did to the children of Judæa eighteen hundred years ago, but what he will do now to ours, whenever we bring them to him; it is the assurance to every child, so soon as he can think or understand who Christ is, that he may go boldly to beg for his Saviour's mercy; that Christ calls him to him, and is ready to take him into his care, and to bless him with an enduring blessing.

I believe, however, that while we admit this of young children, and while many a parent has felt the deepest pleasure in the thought of this promised love of Christ to his infants, or those only a few years removed from infancy; yet that there is an age with which we are not so apt to connect the thought of Christ's love; the age, namely, between childhood and manhood. With manhood we are, of course, in full sympathy, because it is the period to which we have ourselves arrived; and childhood, partly perhaps from the strongness of the contrast which it offers, we are apt to invest with a certain romantic and poetical interest, and

are not unwilling to believe that the innocence of that yet untainted age may be thought worthy of communion with heaven. But the years subsequent to childhood lose this interest of the imagination, without yet acquiring the deeper interest of our habitual sympathy; nor can it be concealed, that life, in these intermediate years, is far from wearing its most engaging aspect; it may be likened to the cold and backward springs of our own climate, the most unlovely season of the year, because we expect luxuriance of growth and beauty, and find all chilled and hard and dull. Such is very often the season of boyhood; the innocence of childhood is manifestly tainted, and the fruits of manhood are not come, and many times show as yet no blossom. It is a season of fear and of anxiety on the part of older persons, the more so, because their children, at that age, seem so little to fear or to be anxious for themselves. It is a season of great spiritual danger, when the seed of eternal life is necessarily weak and tender, and the climate of outward circumstances to which it is exposed, unusually bleak and ungenial. And, therefore, because it is so, it is the very season in which Christ watches over us the most, and would receive us with the tenderest love. He came to seek and to save that which was lost; he came to open the eyes of the blind, to heal those who walked not uprightly, to call the dead that they

might live. It is his own saying, "They that are whole need not a physician, but they who are sick." And, of all periods of life, there is none at which Christ will more gladly receive us than at this very time of our greatest weakness and great temptations; at the very time of our struggling with the besetting faults of boyhood—when, with lives stained by sin, and consciences not acquitting us, and yet not hardened;—we are wandering out of our way daily, more and more, unless the great Shepherd of our souls recall us to himself.

To Him, then, who felt the same temptations which you now feel,—who was himself a boy, and knows that part of human life as well as all the rest,—who feels for it as deep a sympathy,—and who, because it is a time of peculiar danger, regards it, for that very reason, with peculiar care,—with Him let his surpassing love constrain you to take refuge. Remember,—(it is not a little thing to remind you of,)—remember that feelings which you migh shrink from exposing to any human eye,—annoyances, weaknesses, which even your dearest friends might treat lightly, or perhaps with ridicule,—the lightest distress that can vex you, the humblest temptation which can beset you,—little trials, little uneasinesses, which I could not even mention here without seeming to trifle with the sacredness of the place, which, in fact, you would hardly like to make much of to your own selves, and yet which do affect the goodness and

happiness of your lives; all these are regarded as tenderly by Christ as if they were the greatest matters in the world in human estimation. Whatever affects your comfort, and so affects your conduct, is of importance in the eyes of Him with whom you have to do. Perhaps you would hardly express some things in words, even in your secret prayers; they seem so trifling to bring before God. But Christ can read your hearts, and knows what is labouring within them; he knows what it is which most troubles you, or most tempts you; and though it be not uttered in words, he regards you with his sympathy, and will deliver you, or strengthen you to your need. Or, if feeling that you neglect him, that you have often heard his call in vain, you think that you are unworthy of his regard;—if you would fain be better before you offer yourselves to him, then remember that it was the poor, the maimed, the halt, and the blind, whom the king in the parable called in to his marriage supper. When they came in, he furnished them with the wedding garment; but he did not expect that they should wait till they had themselves procured one. It is a true parable: Christ's Spirit is given to Christ's redeemed; it is his promise to his people. Think you that you can obtain it of yourselves before you offer yourselves to him? No; it is not only a great truth of the Gospel, but it is the very Gospel itself, that all which is demanded of us, in the first instance,

is, that the love of Christ should constrain us to come to him;—that feeling our own weakness and his power, we should come to him with repentance and faith, grieving for our own evil, and trusting to him to cure us. And O that this love of Christ, our mighty and perfect Saviour, might indeed constrain us all to come unto him with humble hearts, that he might purify us and strengthen us unto life eternal! Might it constrain us to appear at his table, however unworthy we feel to be admitted there! If we wait till we are worthy, heaven and earth shall sooner pass away, and the judgment overtake us in our sins. But rather let us go to be made worthy; let us go, because he has loved us; and we, though cold, and careless, and full of sin, would fain love him. Let us go, because we are poor and needy, and because we would fain be made rich in all good works, which are the gift of his Spirit. Let us go, because we want help,—because a veil is drawn between us and heaven, and we yearn for our eyes to be opened. Let us go, because we are afraid to go, and half unwilling. Let us go, that our fond fears may be stilled, and our dishonest backwardness removed; that we may fear less, and be more active and zealous; that our will may be wholly as his will, and our weakness strengthened by his power.

SERMON II.

THE SONS OF GOD.

JOHN, i. 12.

As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God.

THIS is one of the encouraging passages of Scripture, full of mercy and of hope. But the words immediately before it are of a different character: —"He came unto his own, and his own received him not." And even the text itself, when put out more fully by the same St. John, in another part of his writings, becomes not indeed less full of mercy, but mixed with something of a more sober character, such as we cannot afford to spare. "Beloved," says St. John, in his first Epistle, "now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And every man that

hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure." What I have read has not consisted of many words, yet it furnishes matter of thought more than enough to occupy all the time which we have now before us. Let us see the principal points which it presents to us, each in its proper order.

First, Those who were Christ's own did not receive him.

Secondly, To those who did receive him he gave power, or, as the margin of our translation reads it, he gave the privilege of becoming the sons of God.

Thirdly, St. John declares for himself and his fellow Christians, that this great privilege was to them not wholly future; that they were then, in fact, enjoying it, yet not to the full; for there was more of the promise yet to be fulfilled, and that in a sense so high, that they could not as yet so much as conceive it. But meanwhile, so enjoying for the present, so hoping for the future, he declares that neither the enjoyment nor the hope were idle; they engrossed his whole being, insomuch that he continually was purifying himself, even as Christ is pure.

First, then, "Christ's own did not receive him." This is a matter of fact asserted of Christ's coming into the world, and of his not being listened to by his own people, the Jews. The words relate, in

their proper meaning, to this, and to this only; it would be mere foolishness to use them as an argument or an authority for any thing else; to suppose that an assertion with respect to a particular fact past, can be taken as a prophecy about other facts to come. But although the words themselves can prove nothing at all with respect to the future,—I mean with respect to that time which was future then, although it is past now,—yet experience has shown, that what St. John here says of one particular time is also true of many other times; so that the words, although not meant to do so, do in fact describe a later state of things as well as a former one. It is still true that Christ comes to his own, and that his own receive him not. For undoubtedly we are Christ's own, exactly in the same sense in which the Jews were his own:—all Christian people who acknowledge him for their King and Lord by their public profession, and who have become members of his Church by baptism, are now in the same relation to him as the Jews were before, when they, too, as a nation, acknowledged the Lord Jehovah as their God, and had become members of his Church by circumcision. We are Christ's own, as the Jews were his own; and surely it is as true of us that we, in a great many instances, do not receive him, as it was true of the Jews then.

To pretend, indeed, to determine what propor-

tion they who do not receive him bear to those who do, would be a vain and a most blamable attempt. It is enough to say, that many, a great many, do not receive him: common experience, our common acquaintance with men's writings, with their words, and, above all, with their actions, make this, as a matter of fact, clear enough. And it is no less clear, that they who do not receive him cannot claim their share in the promise to become the sons of God, in that sense of the word in which St. John here uses it. Or rather, we may say, that according to the reality of our receiving Christ, is the reality of our title of being the sons of God. For, as he who openly rejects Christ has no claim to the very name of son of God, so he who receives him in name only, becomes also only in name a son of God; he who receives him really, he also becomes a son of God really.

But what is it then, "As many as received him?" How are we to know, beyond the mere nominal way in which all who call themselves Christians have received him, whether we have received him or no? None of us has received him perfectly, that we can well understand; for if he were perfectly received, his reign would be also perfect, and sin would be altogether cast out. But have we so received him as that he has or will give us power to become sons of God,—and

that not only now, but for ever? If we have received him with our own choice, then we have. I hope all who have been confirmed have so received him; I hope that all who have ever come to the Lord's table have so received him; and as none, I think, will have done either the one or the other in hypocrisy, and very few, if any, in utter carelessness and indifference, it is not only to be hoped, but believed, that they have almost all received him. But a great many who hear me have never come to the Lord's table, and have never been confirmed; they may wish to know whether they have received him. Let them recollect, then, whether they have ever thought seriously about life and death—good and evil; God and judgment; whether they have ever made a sort of choice between good and evil; whether they have ever prayed to God, in the name of Jesus Christ, that he would strengthen them and save them. If they have, then I think they, too, have received Christ,—imperfectly it may be, and so do we all;—with imperfect knowledge also, for their years are young;—yet in reality, and not only in name. For undoubtedly those three thousand who received Christ after the address of Peter on the day of Pentecost, must have had a great deal to learn respecting him, and the steadiness and strength of their purpose must have infinitely varied. Yet they received him truly;

and so have we, if we have, as it were, listened to his call with our own hearts, and have put ourselves, by our own choice, under his teaching and his care.

Well, then, he gives us power, if this be so, to become the sons of God. Are we, then, worthy really of this high name? St. John says of himself and of his fellow Christians, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God;"—now, in this present time, before they had put off this mortal body. And can we say with equal truth, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God?" For to have had the power or the privilege given us, is not enough: the great question is,—have we availed ourselves of it? Now, this is a great question, and we must earnestly try not to mislead ourselves in answering it. But this is quite certain, that if our receiving of Christ took place some time ago, and has since been little or not at all thought of; if our notions of things are no way different; or if our care about our improvement be not more lively than it was; if, in short, since the day that we so received Christ, and made our choice sincerely to be his, we have not again renewed that choice in our hearts, and rejoiced that it had been made,—then, although the power and privilege to become the sons of God was given us, yet we have not used them; we are the sons of God outwardly alone, and in name, not in reality. We did receive Christ

once, but we have gone back now, and receive him no longer, except in name.

But perhaps there are others, often careless, often sinning, whose improvement is scarcely visible; who, if they know that they have again confirmed their choice since it was first made, know also that they have many times fallen away from it: may these hope that they are the sons of God notwithstanding? And here the answer is most difficult, lest we should either encourage too much, or too much dispirit them. Yet is God less tender and less patient than our earthly parents? We love them, we wish to please them, our hearts cannot bear the thought of casting off their affection and their care, yet many times we do that which we know will not please them; and our attention to their wishes is sometimes crossed by selfishness, and many times by carelessness. Still we feel that we are their children, and that they are our parents: still we know that we love them, nor do we doubt that they also love us. Even so we may be sure, that he who desires to be God's child, who wishes to please him, who would shrink with horror at the thought of being cast off by him, that God, too, is still his Father, and is ready to hear and to answer his requests with all a father's love.

This is encouraging, some may think, and too encouraging. I have made so high a name as that

of a son of God too easily to be purchased. But in that last word lies the error. Did I say that it was a thing to be purchased at all? Or, if we talk of it as a name to which our virtue can entitle us, is it not the fondest and most unchristian presumption? Purchased, indeed, it is, and has been, but not by us, but by the blood of Jesus Christ. To us it is freely given; God loves us, and calls us to be his sons in Christ Jesus; and being thus our loving Father, he will in no wise cast us off, till our evil lives have so hardened our hearts, that we cease altogether to love him, and so may be said to cast off him. "We are the sons of God;" to deny this were to deny the love of God in Christ; we dare not make the mercy of our heavenly Father less than it is his gracious pleasure to make it. "We are the sons of God;" most assuredly, all of us who this day assembled around Christ's table, and many, many more, I trust, besides; "Beloved, we *are* the sons of God; but it doth not yet appear what we *shall be*."

O called by the love of God our Father, redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ, and having received some first-fruits of the Spirit of God,—for none can come unto God, none can confess the Lord Jesus, none can breathe one hearty prayer, but by the helping of the Holy Ghost:—O called to be heirs of our Father's kingdom, of a kingdom incorruptible, and that fadeth not away, reserved

in heaven for us; O born again of a heavenly seed, into the likeness of God in Jesus Christ;—having all these hopes, which none may gainsay, shall we not purify ourselves, even as he is pure; that when he shall appear, he shall quicken our mortal bodies as his Spirit will have quickened our spirits into his glorious image? It is most true, he that hath this hope in him,—and this hope is ours by the blood of Christ,—he that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as Christ is pure.

But if we forget our privileges, and our hope ceases to interest us: if, being the sons of God, we do not grow in the love of our Father, then we shall not purify ourselves, nor will our seed continue in us, but be smothered and overgrown more and more, till it be utterly lost. God's love towards us is more than we can conceive; the danger is not that we think too highly of it, but too coldly; lest, not believing enough in his love to us, we lose more and more our love to him. You now think of him sometimes, and when you do think of him you love him, and cannot bear the thought of displeasing him. This is the natural feeling of a young mind; but this will not be so always. More surely than the winter is now coming on, will your hearts be hardened with advancing years, and that feeling of remorse and wholesome repentance which now makes you condemn yourselves when you think seriously, for

having made such unworthy returns to your Father's love, will be exchanged for the spirit of doubt, or the spirit of self-justification, or the spirit of hardness and callousness. And will you be the sons of God then, when in no portion of your souls is there any thing left of child-like confidence, or of child-like love? nothing but unbelief, or indifference, or slavish fear, mingled with something of slavish murmuring, I had almost said of slavish hatred? No; you will have cast off Him who, with much long-suffering, and by unceasing offers of more than a father's love, strove in vain to keep you as his children. You will have cast him off utterly; and where is that second redemption that will again call you to him, when the redemption once made by the blood of his own Son has been cast in scorn behind you?

"We are the sons of God!"—It is a blessed word, and a most encouraging assurance; let us take heed that we doubt not of our Father's love, nor lose sight of the hope of his inheritance. "We are his sons," and he will not cast us off for every transgression; we are yet, most of us, young in years; and for what is life given us, or why are we not admitted at once whither Christ is gone before, but that we may have time to perfect in ourselves that image which cannot be the work of a moment? In your education for this life, the fulness of the knowledge of manhood is not ex-

pected of you in youth or in childhood; he is satisfying his parents, and answering their wishes for him, who, never going backwards, nor ceasing to go forwards, strengthens his mind week by week, and month by month, and year by year, and removes one piece of ignorance after another, and opens and enlarges, gradually, the range of his knowledge, till his faculties have come to their full ripeness. And even so is it in our education for eternity. Our Father would have us always going forwards, always overcoming some temptation, some bad habit, some bad temper; always growing in confidence and love towards him, and becoming more and more like his first-born, Jesus. This is our course, as in the advance of our understanding, till our faculties have come to their full ripeness. But when will this be with the faculties of our spirits? Not at forty, not at fifty, nor at the very latest hour of undecayed consciousness; no, nor millions of years hence; no, nor ever. We shall never have attained to that perfection in love, but that we shall be growing more and more perfect still. Such is the course of the sons of God. Such will be ours, if we remember that we are so; if, remembering our Father's love, and his glorious promises, the hope of his inheritance remains in us, so that we purify ourselves, even as he is pure.

SERMON III.

CHRIST OUR PATTERN.

MATTHEW, xvii. 19, 20.

Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out? And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief.

IT is now not much less than three hundred years ago that what is called the Reformation was brought about in England. A great deal of good was done by it, and a great deal of harm; because what it destroyed was made up of evil and of good; and men, in plucking up the tares, rooted up, also, much of the wheat along with them. But one good was done by the Reformation, for which we cannot be too thankful; that is, it has made us understand that the sole authority for our faith is to be found in the Scriptures, and it has put the Scriptures, to speak generally, within the reach of all of us. Nor are we slow to confess

that this *is* a very great blessing; it is for ever talked of as such, and written of as such, and I do not doubt, also, that it is felt to be such. But yet it is very plain that it is not felt to be a blessing nearly so much as it is called a blessing; for if it were, our lives would be somewhat different from what they are now. Or perhaps it would be more true to say, that although we feel, generally, that it is a blessing to have the Scriptures, and to read them, as the Eunuch, in the Acts, sat in his chariot and read them, although he did not understand them; yet, from not always understanding how to read them aright, our hearts do not get the profit from them which they are capable of affording.

From this it happens very often that faith does not, as it should do, come by our reading; and because of want of faith, the evil spirits of our own hearts, and the hearts of others, are not cast out. For what Christ said in the text of the *gift* of faith, that without it the evil spirit who had afflicted the child with madness could not be cast out of him, is no less true of the *grace* of faith, that without it no man can cast out of himself, scarcely out of others, the evil spirits of covetousness, of lust, and of pride.

Now, to say how the Scriptures may be used aright in all respects, would be a work far too long for the present occasion. If we consider how large a volume the Bible is, we must see at once that

to give full directions for the right understanding of it is a thing not to be done briefly. But I will take one instance of what I mean, than which it would be impossible to find a better. Let us consider how we can use the Scriptures profitably in those parts which speak directly of the life and death of our Lord Jesus Christ.

What St. Paul calls especially his gospel, or good tidings, may be declared, as he has declared it, in very few words. The simple truth, that Christ died for the sins of all men, and that by his rising again we also shall be raised, is easily told, and, as far as the words go, easily remembered. But I have heard it said, that, if in the food which we eat we were to take out those parts in which the very essence of the nourishment consists, and live upon them only, they would not nourish us nearly as well as they do now. The fibres and substance in our meat must be joined with the finer and more nourishing parts, or else our bodies will not get their nourishment. So, if we take simply what we may call the most nourishing part of God's truth, the doctrine that Christ died for us, and rose again, and present this to our minds continually by itself, our souls will not be nourished by it. God deals with our spiritual food as with our natural food; what is most nourishing is mixed up with that which in itself is less so, yet makes the nourishment of the other far greater. For

take the volume of the New Testament into your hands—to speak of that only,—and look for all those passages which speak of Christ dying for our sins, and take them out from the rest of the book, and how large a portion of it is still left! And yet shall we say that this large portion is of no use to us; that this is but the shell, the other the kernel; that these are but the beggarly elements, while the other is the fulness of knowledge? If we do so put asunder what God has joined, we may gain the spirit of pride, or of folly, or of uncharitableness, but we shall not gain the unsearchable riches of God, which he has laid up in his Son, Christ Jesus.

But if I have ventured to call one part of the New Testament less nourishing than another, I trust none will think that it was spoken in irreverence. I used the language rather to meet the feelings of those who most exalt what they particularly call the Gospel;—namely, as I said before, the declaration, that we have eternal life through the death and rising again of Jesus. And so far we may grant to them, even while we dislike the habit of making such comparisons, that this truth is the great end and object of all the revelation of God. But it is a truth, which, spoken alone, and to unprepared souls, will never bring forth in them its proper fruits.

There are two things very hard to our mortal

nature, and yet most necessary to our happiness; the one of these is, that we should be very much afraid of sin; the other that we should not be afraid of death. We know quite well, that we ought to be both the one and the other; but this is not enough: we require to learn how we may become so, as well as to know that we ought to become so.

Now it was for this end that Christ lived and died openly amongst us, and that the particulars of his life and death were recorded. He might have borne our nature as truly, and died for our sins as truly, had his life been passed away from the sight of men; or had he, like Moses, resigned his spirit on the top of some lonely mountain into the hands of his heavenly Father. But how much of the best support of our souls should we have lost, had this been so! We are not only told briefly that he took our nature upon him, that he lived upon earth for more than thirty years: but we are made, in a manner, the witnesses of his birth, the companions of his ripened manhood: we may go about with him to the synagogue, through the streets, into houses; we may sit down with him at the table, and journey with him in the roads; we may stand by him amidst the assembled multitudes in Jerusalem, and go with him to the desert places, where he spent the night in prayer after the day had been spent in charity. Nor are

we told simply, as of his servant Moses, that he died in the mount according to the word of the Lord;—but death, in all its character, is shown as assailing him. We may see how the image of it affected his mind when distant, and how it affected him when near. We see him, if I may so speak, on the most gradual death-bed of the gentlest disease,—when the mind, fully alive to the certainty of its fate, collects its faculties, undisturbed by pain, unclouded by the wanderings of weakness, to receive its awful change. This we witness in his conversation with his disciples on the evening on which he was betrayed; but because he knew that few of the children of men die thus peacefully, but that the passage is mostly amidst pains and fears, many times amidst indifference and unkindness, sometimes amidst hatred and scorn,—it was his will that we should also see how he bore himself amidst all these. We see him forsaken; we see him insulted; we see him enduring the extremity of bodily pain; we see him—and it is the divinest mercy of all—suffering the extremity of inward trouble, of desolateness, and fear. We see him in all these, and we see him triumph over them all; and we hear him, when all were overpast, giving up his spirit into the hands of God, to show that, "in all things we, too, may be more than conquerors through him who loved us."

The book in which we may read this is in our

hands, and we can use it when we will. It hardly matters what particular chapter of the Gospels we open, for Christ's life is in every part of it more or less our pattern. Some may possibly be puzzled how this can be, when there are so many points of difference between him and us. For, not to speak of smaller differences, of time and place, and therefore of habits of living, is it not a great difference that Christ went about from place to place, with no other business than to instruct the people and to cure their sicknesses, while we, for the most part, have a fixed home of our own, and are not, and cannot be, engaged either in teaching or healing diseases, but have each of us our own regular business. It is so; and therefore Christ's example is so much the more needed. Is there one of us who might not apply to himself Christ's words: "I must work the work of Him who sent me while it is day: the night cometh when no man can work?" Now it is the principle here contained which is the great matter of example. There are many of us who perform one part of what is here said well enough; many who work while it is day, because they know that the night is coming; many, in other words, who are not slothful or idle, but working industriously in their calling, and knowing that time once lost cannot be recalled. Now these persons should learn of Christ to fulfil his words altogether; not only to

"work while it is day," but to look upon their work as "the work of Him who sent them." For so it is, let its nature be what it will: the work of our calling, whatever it be, is the work of God; and the words of Christ apply to whatever is the business of our lives, as well as to that especial work which was the particular business of his. But this we need to remember, and for this very purpose Christ's life is so useful to us. For we see that God was constantly in his thoughts; that the desire of his life was to do God's will. He mixed with other men freely, but he never forgot whose he was, and whose work he had to do. But we do forget it constantly; we think that our work is our own work, and will bring with it its earthly fruit; we rise up to it early, and we late take rest; but it may be that, except a few short prayers in the morning, and a few more at evening, nothing has recalled us to the thought of our heavenly Master, no part of our work has been hallowed by being done in his name.

And what is the consequence? This goes on day after day, and week after week, and our eyes and thoughts are fixed alike upon things visible and earthly. This gives the colour to our minds; all our impressions come from the things around us; the things of another world become utterly strange to us. Now things with which we are not familiar are slow in winning our belief; it does not

follow that we should believe them to be false, but their very strangeness will not let us fully receive them and enter into them as true. Any wonderful story belonging to a subject which we have not very often thought about seems incredible to us; because we do not know what there is to make that which seems so wonderful agreeable in reality to truth and reason. And so it is, above all, with the truths concerning God and Christ. If we keep them generally out of our minds, our belief in them waxes fainter and fainter; we all know how vague and powerless is the fear of God's judgments to restrain us, when the temptation is strong to indulge in our own ways and desires. It is powerless, because it comes across our minds as a sort of stray thought, and finds nothing in our habitual views and notions ready to entertain and sympathize with it. Our hearts say with Pharaoh, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?" We may well ask, for we, in fact, do not know him. Who is the Lord? Try and think of him as a spirit, as one who has neither beginning nor end; who is everywhere, yet with no bodily form. Think of him in this way, and can we find him out by searching? Nay, he is, and will be, for ever hidden; they are but words with which we deceive ourselves, fancying that they give us real knowledge. But he who has studied God in Christ, who has learnt to feel towards him some-

what as Christ felt, to think of him as his Father, who loves him with an infinite love; who has studied God in Christ in a yet higher sense; that is, has learnt to love Christ for those divine perfections which his life exhibits, and for the infinite love shown to us in his death; who thinks of Christ, as gone before him into the unknown world, and amidst every thing there unknown and incomprehensible, can yet fix his thoughts, and hopes, and affections, upon the one object whom he can conceive of, Jesus, the Son of man, "who is not ashamed to call us brethren;" such a man has learnt to love God, and so has learnt to know him; to him God's judgment is not a vague and strange thought; it represents to him the loss of what is the dearest hope of his life,—to be for ever with Jesus, who gave his own life for him, and, being glorified through Jesus, to be made able to know God as he is.

Therefore it seems, to me, that the readiest way to have our faith so strengthened as that it may cast out the evil of our hearts, is to make ourselves fully acquainted with all the particulars of Christ's character and life and death. There we shall see perfect wisdom and perfect goodness presented to us in a form which the humblest can understand and love. Where is the child, however unable to comprehend all that Christ has done for him, who cannot be moved by that simple

scene of Christ calling young children to him, and taking them up in his arms, and laying his hands upon them, and blessing them? Where is the grown man, craving for some assured staff to lean on amidst the valley of the shadow of death, who may not find it in the story of the raising of Lazarus? Let him read it through, piece by piece, and bless God for the goodness which has left all those minute particulars recorded for us. There we may dwell deliberately on the full manifestation of divine power and love. We see, as it were, the whole process before our eyes; death suffered to take his full course; corruption to lay hold upon his prey: every well-known accompaniment of our own end is here: the mourning of our relations, the sorrow of our friends, our sickness, our death, our burial. And in that calm power which, in his own good time, made the grave to give up its dead, in that voice which called into the darkness of the tomb, "Lazarus, come forth;" have we not a most comforting warrant of what will also happen to us, when the same power shall destroy death for ever, and the same voice shall reach to the lowest depths of our grave also, and bid us come forth like Lazarus?

But this picture is not presented to us alone. He who had power over death and hell is shown to us as having no rest from daily labour; as so surrounded by persons craving to be taught or

healed, that he had no leisure so much as to eat; yet still doing, unwearied, his Father's work, and withdrawing at night into a place apart, where he could commune with God more fully. He is shown to us, ever kind, ever patient, ever watchful for others, ever regardless of himself. May we not hope, if we learn, as we must do, thoroughly to love one so good,—may we not hope that we shall grow ourselves to be more like him? May we not hope that when we are selfish, proud, unkind, indolent, heedless of God, the recollection of Christ may come upon our minds, and that we may fancy him saying to us, as he did to his sleeping disciples, "Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation: the spirit truly is willing, but the flesh is weak"? May we not hope that, when we are unforgiving, those words may sound in our ears, in which he stayed the anger of his disciples, when they would have called down fire on the Samaritan village; or in which he prayed for those who had reviled him and crucified him? May we not hope that when worldly cares are troubling us, or worldly prosperity encouraging us, our hearts may recall his soothing and warning voice; that the very hairs of our head are all numbered; that he who seeketh his life shall lose it; that most wretched was his condemnation who laid up treasure for himself, and was not rich toward God?

So making his words, on every occasion, familiar

to us; so bringing before our minds his actions; so imaging—for surely we may and should try to do so—his very voice and look; may we bring our souls into constant communion with Him. And then faith will grow with our love; and in our confidence in Him whom we have learned to know so well and to love so dearly, shall we not cast out the evil spirit from our hearts, that we may be a fit habitation for him, and may be in him and he in us for ever?

NOTE ON SERMON III.

(Page 35.)

So imaging—for surely we may and should try to do so—his very voice and look, &c.—I have ventured in another place (Essay on the right Interpretation of the Scriptures, p. 392 and *note*), to regret the disuse of the crucifix in Protestant countries; and as the subject seems to me by no means unimportant in a practical point of view, I shall take this opportunity of recurring to it.

1. It is manifest to every thinking person that the fact of the incarnation was a virtual repeal of the letter of the second commandment. For in the person of Jesus Christ, there was given us an image of God which we might and should represent to ourselves in our own minds; and what our thoughts and minds may lawfully and profitably dwell upon, may clearly be no less lawfully and profitably presented to our bodily senses: if it be right and useful to think of Christ,—and by that very name we mean not the abstract notion of deity, but God made man,—the most effectual means of bringing him vividly present to our minds must be the best; and this is best effected, as is proved by the common feeling of mankind with regard to portraits, by enabling ourselves in some sort actually to see him. At the same time all anthropomorphism, in the bad sense of the term, is barred by the constant language of the Scripture concerning God the Father. The man, Christ Jesus, represents to us not the Godhead as it is in itself, but all that we can profitably conceive of it: the Godhead in itself, we are told, is utterly invisible and incomprehensible; and to attempt to conceive of it, or to image it to ourselves, were indeed a real violation of the second commandment.

2. The supposed evils of using the crucifix do not follow from the evils which have resulted from the image worship of

the Roman Catholics. By far the greater part of their image worship is superstitious and blamable, not from its offering a *visible* object to our devotions, but an object altogether false and unlawful. Destroy every *image* of the virgin and the saints, and the feelings entertained towards them are no less blamable: it is the notion formed of them in the mind which is injurious; and it makes no sort of difference whether this notion be embodied in a visible shape or no. And, again, all the superstition connected with the wood of the true cross, or with the sacredness of any particular image of our Lord, is perfectly distinct from the Christian use of the crucifix, and has arisen merely from a general ignorance of the Gospel. If our Lord himself were to return to earth, no Christian, I suppose, would refuse to worship him; yet it would be a gross superstition to believe that his actual presence would of itself save us, or that to touch his garments would at once secure us from the judgment of God. Now what it were superstition to believe of himself, it is of course superstition to believe of his image; but if his living presence impressed his words more deeply on our hearts, would it be superstition then to seek his company? and if his image, though in a less degree, produce the same effect, if it keep him in our remembrance, and recall our wandering thoughts to him, is it superstition to use such an aid?

3. The world is ever present to us while Christ is absent. We need therefore all possible means to remind us of him whom visible things so tempt us to forget. Every one has felt the effect of a church in the most crowded parts of a large city; there, much more than in a peaceful country landscape, we feel thankful for the sight of the spire or tower "whose silent finger points to heaven." But when the church is out of sight, what is there either in town or country to remind us of our heavenly calling? Is this consistent with Christian wisdom, knowing how prompt our senses are to lead us to evil,

to be so careless in making them minister to good? The Bible Society, and other societies of the same kind, can have circulated the Scriptures to little purpose, if the sight of the cross and the crucifix would indeed minister to superstition rather than to godliness. But I believe that it would be far otherwise; and that it is one great benefit arising from the efforts of those societies, if we would but use it, that what is in itself a great help to holiness, would no longer, as in the days of the Reformation, be made an occasion of evil, because the true nature of the Gospel was not generally known.

It will appear, from what has been said, that pictures or statues of our Lord are less required in a church than in any other place; and for this evident reason, that by the very act of going to church, and by our employment while there, we are reminded of Christ without any external aid. It is in our own houses, and in public places, not in themselves devoted to a religious purpose, that such Christian memorials are most needed; and though many would pass by them unmoved, yet there would be also many whom they would touch in some softer moment, and whose better thoughts and resolutions they would powerfully strengthen. Nor would it be a light matter that a mark of our Christian profession would thus be set visibly upon the whole land. Christianity should be mixed up with every part of our daily life; but it has been the practice of Protestantism to banish all outward signs of it from every place but a church: and although the signs may exist without the reality, yet it is not easy for the reality to exist amongst a people generally, without being accompanied also by the outward sign.

SERMON IV.

GOD IN CHRIST.

MATTHEW. xi. 27.

All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.

BEFORE I proceed to say any thing of this verse, I will read the two verses that come just before it. "At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight." It seems to me, that taking these verses together with what follows in the text, the case now is very much the same as it was when our Lord spoke these words; it is still in a particular manner to those here called "babes," that is, to

persons of simple minds, not having much knowledge, but ready to be taught, that it is revealed in its full extent how all things are delivered to Christ by his Father. To judge by their language on any serious occasion, whether of trouble or of joy, I should imagine that good Christians, amongst the poorer classes, looked up perhaps more directly to Christ as having all power both in heaven and in earth, than is the case with those who may be called "the wise and prudent." With these last, the term "Providence" is more in use: they speak and seem to think of God, rather in a general way, as the Maker of all things, than as he is revealed in the Gospel—in the person of Jesus Christ, as our Saviour as well as our Maker. And the difference is not altogether trifling: for, when we speak of Providence, we may, and often do, get our notions about it from other places than from the Scriptures, because it is a word which others, as well as Christians, have used; but when we speak of Christ, we think of God only as he has himself been pleased to reveal himself; for of Christ we know nothing whatever, but through the teaching of the Spirit of God.

Christ, then, says of himself, that all things are delivered to him of his Father; or, as it is in another place, that all power is given unto him in heaven and in earth; or, as he says again in St. John's Gospel (chap. xvi. 15), "All things that

the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that the Spirit shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you." And there are a great many passages more to the same effect. All these things were meant to teach us that Christ was not like one of the prophets merely; who, having served God in their own generation, and done good to men, fell asleep, and were gathered to their fathers like other men, and are only known to after times by the works which they may have done; they themselves are no longer present, but past. And in this manner Christ's Sermon on the Mount, and his various parables and discourses, might still be living amongst us, though Christ himself were dead. But this is not so with him,—not his works only, but he himself also is alive for evermore; his Father worketh hitherto, and he worketh in like manner. He is ascended up far above all heavens, that he may fill all things with his power; and, till he comes again, his people were meant to look to him as their Lord; to come to him in all their distresses, whether of mind, body, or estate; to trust in him with an undoubting faith, that even as he died for them and rose again, so will he guide and guard them through all troubles and difficulties till they fall asleep in him, and their redemption is fulfilled. This is he whom our fathers saw with their eyes, and heard with their ears, and touched with their

hands,—whom they saw, and heard, and knew; and whom we, through their testimony, though now we see him not, yet believing, can know and conceive in our minds in like manner; and so rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Yet if we can know him and conceive of him, what mean the words in the text which follow—"No man knoweth the Son but the Father?" It seems as if Christ himself contradicted what I have been saying, and declares that we cannot know him. Indeed we can know him, and yet we cannot: it seems a strange contradiction to say so, yet it is a contradiction which applies to a great many even of created things; we know them, and we know them not. We know how they act; we have seen, or can image to ourselves, a notion of them, but what they are in their very nature we know not. So it is with the sun in the heavens: we have all felt his warmth, and seen his brightness; we know how he ripens the fruits of the earth, and makes the world such as we can live in; yet what he is in himself, of what made, or how, that we know not, and probably cannot know. And so it is much more with Him by whom the sun was made. His goodness we know, and his power; his love and mercy we have felt; and even of his very person, as it pleased him to become flesh, and to dwell among us, we can readily conceive. But what he is in

himself,—the eternal, the incomprehensible,—that we cannot know; none but the Godhead knows what the Godhead is; none knoweth the Son save the Father, none knoweth the Father save the Son, none knoweth the things of God save the Spirit of God.

The next words in the text seem to contain nothing difficult: "No man knoweth the Father save the Son." We do not imagine that any human being can properly be said to know God. Yet the very next words say that there are some who can know him; for it adds, "and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." So that they can know the Father to whom Christ has pleased to reveal him. And this is the practical part of the whole matter, and the part on which I mean to dwell during the rest of this discourse, after I have just explained what may seem to be a difficulty with regard to the understanding of it. For it seems to say that we can know the Father, if Christ reveals him to us, but that we cannot know Christ at all, "for none," it says, "knoweth the Son save the Father." What is meant, however, is this;—that of Christ, as far as he was man, we can know very well by our own common understandings; there needs no particular revelation from heaven to make us comprehend him: but as far as he is God, we cannot understand him, nor is it revealed to us what the nature of God is. But,

of God the Father, whom no man hath seen or can see, we know nothing but by revelation—nothing, that is, of his manner of dealing with men, and much more, nothing of what he is in himself. This last we are not to know, any more than we can know any thing of the Son, as far as he is God: but as we can know of the Son as man, by what those who lived with him on earth have told us of him, so we can know of the Father, as far as concerns his manner of dealing with us, from what the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, has declared of him. This knowledge we can gain through Christ, but without him we can know not even so much as this.

Now, then, in what sense is it true that none knoweth the Father, save he to whom the Son will reveal him; or, in other words, what is the knowledge of the Father which we, as Christians, have gained? It is not the knowledge of his great power and wisdom, for nature itself teaches us these; "the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handywork;" or if we look around us upon earth, the mountains and green hills, the fields and trees, the fowls of the air and the cattle, they teach the same; and yet, perhaps, above all, our own bodies and minds, so fearfully and wonderfully made, declare the power and wisdom of Him who made them. Nor is it altogether the knowledge of his good-

ness; for although there is in creation much of suffering and of evil which we cannot understand, still there are many more proofs that God wills the happiness of his creatures: even as seen in the works of creation only, we might think of him as a God who loves to be gracious. But this is a knowledge of God very insufficient for our infirmities. It is very magnificent to think of when we are at ease in ourselves, well and happy; but it fails us when the trials of life press upon us. Then the thought of God's mere wisdom and power is overwhelming rather than comforting. The high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity is so far removed from our weakness, that we cannot lift up our eyes to him with any hope of attracting his regard. And there is so much suffering upon earth, in particular cases, that however much we may believe in God's goodness upon the whole, yet we may well doubt whether it will reach to us—whether a creature so insignificant may not perish, as we tread an insect under our feet, and be as nothing in the infinite scheme of God's providence.

When I thus put myself in thought, even for a moment, out of the light of Christ's gospel, when I fancy myself to be as one to whom the Son has not revealed the Father, it seems to heighten my sense of the happiness which it is to have been taught of Christ. For consider what it is to be told

that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, to the end that all who believe in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." In these few words there is contained all that we need. We might have thought that God, so great and so exalted, might scarcely regard us, the children of men: that, although the general system of his providence was for good, yet that, as in human systems, even in this little world of ours, particular evil passes unnoticed if the general benefit be secured; so and much more it might be in the vast system of the universe. But now we hear that God not only wills the good of the universe as a whole, but that he loves us, the inhabitants of this world; and not that he loves us merely, but that he so loves us as to have given his only-begotten Son to save us: and this not for mankind in general, but for each one of us in particular; "that whosoever believeth in him should not perish." Nor yet is it a love that reaches to this world only, that will provide for us till we die; it is an everlasting love, to be enjoyed by us everlastingly, For God gave his Son, that whosoever believeth in him should have everlasting life.

Truly, then, may we say that we know the Father, when Christ has revealed to us thus much of his infinite love to us. But is there not yet another thing which he has revealed to us, while thus revealing his love:—another thing which, without

him, we should least of all have dreamt of? "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son." It shows, indeed, infinite love: but why was such a proof of it needed? why must the only-begotten Son of God be thus given? We cannot carry our thoughts fully up to the awful declaration which is here made of God's *holiness*, of his abhorrence of all evil. It costs us so little to forgive our own sins, and we are so indulgent to those of others, when we ourselves do not suffer from them, that we naturally conceive of God after the same fashion. The savage and the half-civilized man thinks that he can bribe God to forgive him, by costly or by painful sacrifices; the philosopher, —I may well say so, since in this they were all agreed, and thought it folly to think otherwise,— the philosopher thinks that sacrifices are not needed, for that the goodness of God cannot visit with severity the faults of his creatures. But he who is in the bosom of the Father has declared to us that evil must cease to be evil, or that it must be destroyed from out of the kingdom of God; that God's love to us would spare even his own Son to save us from destruction, but that God's holiness must have destroyed us—yea, must and will now destroy us—if we lay not hold of the redemption which he has offered. This is the love of God, not to pass over our sins, but to give his own Son to be the propitiation for our sins. And this proof

of his love shows what must come to us if we refuse the propitiation thus offered.

This, if fully entered into our minds, if believed with an undoubting and unwavering faith, must indeed save us all. To think of God thus revealed in Christ Jesus, thus perfect in holiness, thus infinite in love, not to all of us taken together, but to each one of us separately,—must, one should think, be life eternal. At least it is most certain, that it is death not so to think of him. It is death not to be awed by the holiness of God, nor to be softened by his love. For then we go on carelessly and hardly; we live after our own devices; we fear nothing, we hope for nothing beyond what this life can offer. So we are dead in trespasses and sins; we are, to use Christ's own words, condemned already: the seal, the pledge, the earnest and foretaste of eternal death is visibly stamped upon us. What can the Resurrection then do for us, when, the veil being drawn aside, and seeing all things as they are, our part and portion will be at once manifest to ourselves? We were told in our lifetime that God was the fountain of happiness; but we laughed at it, and sought our pleasure in the things which he had made. They are now destroyed, and God is present, and all that infinite multitude of good and blessed beings, whether of this world or of numberless others, whether of those who had never known sin, or of those who had

been cleansed from it by the blood of Christ; whose hope it was, whose endless joy it is, to know and worthily to love their Maker. These are not of us, nor we of them; we know not God, and never shall know him; we know evil, and it shall be our portion for ever. Truly, this fearful portion is but the natural end of ungodliness; the moment that created things have passed away, those who loved nothing else must needs be miserable!

But God is not a God of the dead, but of the living; for all live unto him. To know him and to love him is life; for he passes not away for ever. Whoso seeks after him shall find him; and whoso finds him has found an eternal portion of blessing. All the evil which we now suffer in this world arises from the imperfection of our knowledge of him, and from the feebleness of that faith which now should be in the place of knowledge. Our earnest prayer should be, "Lord, increase our faith!" That prayer includes every thing, for Christ has revealed the Father to us; and all that is wanted is, that we should heartily believe his testimony. Lord, increase our faith, that we may believe in thy holiness, and believe in thy love; that we may know and feel, in their full meaning, thy Son's most gracious revelation of thee, that thou didst so love us as to give him for our salvation, that we should not perish, but have everlasting life!

SERMON V.

CHRISTIAN REDEMPTION.

ROMANS, vii. 24.

O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

THE thing here described St. Paul has, to use his own words on a similar occasion, "transferred to himself in a figure for our sakes:" that is, he has applied to his own case what is in fact a general truth, referring not to himself particularly, but to all men. There is a time in every man's life, probably a great many times, in which he ought to feel what St. Paul expresses in the text; it may be that he does not feel so, but that is because he is not aware of, or impressed by, his own real condition; and if he does not feel it himself, so much the less is the likelihood of his being delivered from it. There is a time, or times, in the lives of all of us, when we ought to feel what St. Paul

expresses: let us consider, each for himself, whether this present time be one of them.

The time when the text is applicable to any one would seem to be a very sad one: for the language is that of great unhappiness. The words, whether taken as in our translation, or whether they might be more properly rendered, "Who shall deliver me from this body of death?"—"this state, which is one of mere destruction,"—describes a great misery; they suppose a man to be bound down to ruin, and with no prospect of escaping from it. And when we look back a little to inquire what is meant by a man being thus hopelessly lost, the explanation is very striking; for we find it to be, that "when he would do good, evil was present with him." From whatever reason, his good resolutions were always being overcome by the presence of temptation: the purpose of his heart in the morning was, "I *will* do good this day;" but the witness of his conscience in the evening always tells him, "Thou *hast* done evil." So it appears, according to St. Paul, that every one whose good purposes so end in nothing, is bound, like a prisoner, in a state of certain destruction; and may well bemoan his fate, and ask, "who will deliver him?"

The peculiarity in St. Paul's view of such a man's case is in the strength of his impression as to its misery. No doubt our common sense tells

us, that resolving without doing is worth little; still, in points of morals, men's feelings are inclined to persuade them that there is more good in resolving well, than evil in not doing well; they take more credit for wishing to do good, than shame at finding that all the time evil is present with them. The fact is a curious one, and shows plainly how low is the standard of merit which we are naturally inclined to set ourselves. It seems a great thing even to resolve to do well, because there are so many who do not so much as this; who do evil without scruple, or who live on carelessly, never taking the pains to ask themselves whether they are living well or no. Compared, therefore, with this large portion of the human race, those who do examine themselves, who do think of their evil or careless life with regret, and who resolve to mend it, appear to be persons of positive excellence. So it is, that comparing ourselves with ourselves we are not wise. But the Apostle Paul compares those who resolve to mend their lives not with those who do not resolve at all, but with those who both resolve and do accordingly. It is very true that the light soil in the parable, where the seed did spring up, though only for a short time, was better than the hard wayside, where it never sprung up at all. And so, after long walking on the stones and shingle of the sea-beach, the commonest weeds, the mere thistles,

and briers, and reeds, which cover the first piece of ground out of the reach of the waters, appear refreshing by the contrast. But when compared with the soil which yields fruit for man's life, the ground that produces only thorns and briers is accursed, and to be burned; and so the state of him who resolves to do good, but finds evil present with him, when compared with the state of Christ's redeemed people, is justly called by the Apostle a condition of death.

Now there are, probably, a great many persons who have, from time to time, been impressed more or less strongly with a sense of their own evil, who have been much struck with religious language, and whose minds have been opened, in a manner, to a new world, by being made acquainted with their relations to God. This impression has been often insisted on with great earnestness; it has been called conversion, and, in some cases, those who have experienced it have felt themselves safe for ever, and certainly to be reckoned amongst Christ's redeemed. But if we want to know whether it really is conversion or no, we have only to examine ourselves whether, when we would do good, evil is present with us; or, in other words, whether our good resolutions are kept in practice, as well as sincerely made. What was said once in a different sense is still true; that we must through much trouble enter into the kingdom of

God. It must be through much trouble, because the overcoming our natural faults is a work of great trouble, and unless we do overcome them the victory is theirs and not ours; we are their bondmen and not Christ's freemen. It would be well then if every one who has been impressed in the manner which I have described, were forthwith to consider within himself what are the faults to which he is most inclined. Few, I believe, would be at a loss to find out this if they tried to do it; in many things, the very censures or ridicule of others tell us what our weak points are immediately, and those secret faults and weaknesses which are unknown to other eyes, can we not in a moment tell what they are if we look into our own bosoms steadily? Now, whatever our most natural fault may be, there is the point on which we may first try whether Christ has indeed redeemed us from sin and death, or whether we are still their slaves. Say that our fault is temper; a quickness in taking offence, or a carelessness in giving it; an impatience of any thing that thwarts us, or a slowness to confess fairly when we have unkindly thwarted others. It is manifest that we need not wait long before we shall have an opportunity of trying, in these matters, what is our strength through Christ's grace in us. The trial comes every day, and often in every day. Now, then, are we or evil to be the conquerors? The

evening comes, and we look back to see what has happened; we remember a word unkindly said, but immediately repented of, and repaired, so far as we could, by an expression of regret, and by careful kindness in our language and manner afterwards. Here our enemy had surprised us at first, and gained an advantage over us; but we recovered ourselves, and the advantage in the end remained with us. Again, on another occasion, we remember that something happened to vex or disappoint us; but we thought that the heirs of Christ's glory would do but foolishly to mind even the very lighter troubles of life; and our brow was not clouded nor our cheerfulness impaired; nor even the current of our peaceful feelings for a moment troubled. Here then was a decided victory; to will was present with us, and God gave us power, not only to will but to do. This was a taste of Christ's liberty,—a slight one, indeed, a mere glimpse of that light whose full and unclouded glory is the eternal portion of his redeemed,—still it was a glimpse of it, it was a sign of his Spirit in us; in that one instance there was no condemnation for us, for we walked not after the flesh, but after the Spirit; regarded for that moment, and we were delivered from the body of death, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Some, perhaps, would be afraid of dwelling with this delight upon any one instance of evil over-

come in their hearts and conduct; they would be afraid of its leading to boasting, and a proud reliance on ourselves. Perhaps, in our evil nature, there is no fault from which we ought to think ourselves secure; one danger is no sooner escaped than an opposite one may appear to threaten us. Yet surely there is a joy of an approving conscience; there is a confidence towards God when our heart condemns us not, which are a just portion of the inheritance of Christ's people; and we may not lessen the largeness of his bounty. But, indeed, I know not by what law boasting can be so shut out as by the law of faith. It is possible, that one struggling with his temper, on such grounds as are held out sometimes in unchristian and ungodly books, may very well be tempted to pride. If I overcome my anger, because I think it lowers my dignity to indulge it; if I bear disappointment quietly, because I think that a great mind ought not to allow itself to be disturbed by outward things; the victory, no doubt, is the victory of the spirit of pride rather than of the spirit of Christ: we have but cast out devils through Beelzebub, the prince of the devils. But I spoke of overcoming our temper through the faith of Christ; of overcoming anger, not because it is unworthy of our dignity to indulge it, but because, if Christ forgave us all our sins, we ought also to forgive one another. I spoke of

bearing disappointment, not because our inward greatness should be proof against outward things, but because Christ pleased not himself in any thing that he did, but for the joy that was set before him endured his cross daily; and because we, with the same prospect through his love, should bear our cross daily too. I cannot think that the victory over our sins, gained thus entirely through the Spirit of Christ, showing to our minds the things of Christ, can easily lead us to pride; but that rather, so often as for Christ's sake we strive to follow his example, our love to him will far prevail over our satisfaction in ourselves;—nay, that amid joy for every sin so conquered, there will be the deeper humility for those many sins of whose presence our more enlightened conscience will become constantly more and more aware.

To return then to the state of that person, who, on looking back upon his heart and conduct during the day, sees that in one or more points the chains of sin have been broken off from him, that he has been truly, in one respect, redeemed;—will he not be encouraged the next day to further exertions? will he not hope to win further victories? Suppose now, that he feels one of his prevailing faults to be indolence, or a desire to be always pleasing himself. In this case, a greater effort perhaps is needed; he has not only to avoid doing evil, but

to rouse himself actively to do good. "I am doing no harm!"—so the deceiving heart whispers; "but I cannot always be working, and God does not grudge me my enjoyment." There is so much truth mixed up in this language, that its practical falsehood is doubly dangerous. And where is the wisdom that will teach us to defeat the spell? None, I believe verily, none, whether in earth or heaven, save the spirit of Christian love. If the intellect only is to decide how much of our time or exertions our neighbour may justly claim, the question will never be decided; certainly, it will never be so decided as to give us the victory over indolence and selfishness. But pray we, with all our hearts, that Christ will fill us with the spirit of Christian love. And therefore, to gain this, let us again and again think of what he has done for us; "God so loved us, that he gave his only-begotten Son to die for us: and if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. God, sending his own Son into the world, condemned sin in the flesh." So, indeed, it should be, that so great a proof of his love should call forth an answering love in us, strong enough to overcome all temptations to sin. But we ought so to love God, and one another, but yet we do not. We do not, because our faith is weak; because the image of God's love in Christ is but faintly impressed on our minds; because we do not see by

faith "Him who is invisible." Is not here, then, a reason why we should be careful in the exercise of prayer, and of reading the Scriptures?—why we should use these only means in our power to keep up in our minds the reality, the lively consciousness of the reality, of Christ's death and resurrection? Is not this a reason for our reading the Scripture over and over again, even when our intellect can almost tell beforehand every word that is coming? So it is with respect to our own recollection of any beautiful scene; the knowledge of any minute particulars connected with it; the height of the cliffs, their nature, the distance from one point to another, the way to get the best view of it; these may still dwell in our memory, and no second visit is needed to restore them. But the impression of the whole scene upon us,—nay, what the whole scene was,—we cannot vividly recall; we are glad even of a picture, however inadequate, to revive in us something of the same delight as when we looked on the reality. And so, but much more, is it with the moral impression of Christ's death: as a fact, in its historical particulars, we may remember it for years without ever opening the Bible; whenever we were asked about it, the recollection might be fresh and ready. But what is become the while of our constant consciousness of its reality? Where is the distinctness of our image of those few days,—those days in which is con-

centered more than the interest of millions of years,—those days from Christ's triumphant entry into Jerusalem, to his last recorded words to his disciples before he ascended into heaven? Where is our sense of all the deep truths here contained, concerning sin, and acquittal, and judgment? concerning eternal life, or eternal death? Never, indeed, will these truths be present to us enough; but surely, every remembrance of them that we can gain, we ought to gain; by reading, by prayer, by that outward and visible act, so mercifully commanded, by which we "show forth continually the Lord's death till he come;" by every means of grace given to us, we should labour to fulfil in ourselves the blessed words of St. Paul, "that the life which we now live in the flesh, we live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved us, and gave himself for us."

And if we did so live in faith, would there be any feeling in us to cry, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Should we sorrowfully feel that we were still the slaves of sin; for that "when we would do good, evil was present with us"? Would not our constant feeling be, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord"? In all things I am more than conqueror through Him that loved me; sin has no more dominion over me, for the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death.

SERMON VI.

CHRISTIAN COMMUNION.

JOHN, vi. 62, 63.

What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before? It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.

A SHORT time before these words were uttered, our Lord had used the expression, "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him;" and again, "He that eateth me, even he shall live by me." Many of his disciples said, when they heard these words, "This is an hard saying, who can hear it?"—they either did not, or would not, understand his meaning. Then Jesus, knowing in himself that they either found or made a difficulty in what he had said, went on to say to them, "Doth this offend you? Do you really find it impossible to understand

what I mean, when I say, that he who eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him; or when I tell you, that he who eateth me, even he shall live by me? What, and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before? If you are so bent on understanding me literally, in thinking that I am really speaking of my flesh and blood in the common meaning of the words, what will you say when I am taken up from you, and the clouds receive me from your sight? How will you be prepared to bear my absence from you in body, if your notions of the good which you are to gain from me are so wholly outward and bodily? But it is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing. When I say, that by eating me you shall live by me, that by eating my flesh and drinking my blood, you shall be one with me and I with you, I certainly do not mean that this my body, so soon to be taken from you, can be possessed of such an undying, of such a mighty power of giving life. It is not my flesh which you must eat, or my blood which you must drink; but rather my spirit which you must receive heartily and entirely into your own. The words which I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life. It is of them that I say, he who eateth me, shall live by me. Receive them into your inmost souls; digest them, let them mingle with every thought and feeling,

till your spirits are but as the image of my Spirit, and of the Spirit of God. So being one with me and with my Father, you shall live through me; if my Spirit be in you, and quicken your souls, that same Almighty Spirit, to whom belongs the creation of all things, whether bodily or spiritual, shall, in his good time, quicken your mortal bodies also, that ye may live both body and soul for ever."

Such, I think, is the meaning of those words of our Lord which I have taken for my text this day. Nothing can more strongly repel the fond and unworthy superstition which would give to any thing but spirit the virtue of healing and quickening our spirits; which would suppose that our Lord's flesh or blood, in the literal sense; that the pieces of his cross, the remnants of whatever had touched him bodily, could be in themselves of any religious use whatever. But, as I have often said, no labour can be more vain, or worse than vain, than that of attacking errors which are not ours. We are not given to these superstitions; we do not think that we can eat the very body and blood of Christ; we attach no spiritual value to the relics of his passion, even could we believe them to be genuine. And we do well to disregard the flesh, which profiteth nothing; if, along with this, we feel a regard, as we ought to do, for the Spirit, that really quickeneth.

"The words which I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." It is most true, but yet it were to do their spirit a great injury if we made it to be no more than this, "that he who keepeth Christ's words shall live for ever." He does not mean to represent his words as being only a law of life, delivered by him nearly two thousand years ago, which we must, to the best of our ability, strive to keep. His words, which are spirit and life, relate not only to the commands, but to the promises which he has given us. It is not only where he says, "A new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another;" but also where he says, "Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest;" where he declares, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world;" where he says, "I am the Vine, ye are the branches; ye cannot bear fruit except ye abide in me; for without me ye can do nothing." It is not then only, as the Prophet who, nearly two thousand years ago, preached the law of the kingdom of God, but as the living Saviour, full of tenderness, grace, and power, who "was dead, and is alive for evermore," that we should receive his words to our soul's strength. For as the kingdom of God is not folly or superstition, so neither is it hardness or coldness. It is vain and superstitious to call him, "Lord! Lord!" and to do not the things

which he commands us; yet theirs was a spirit no less vain, and quite as far from the kingdom of God, who complained of the useless waste of the ointment poured, by one who truly loved him, upon his head, and who would fain have had it "sold for much, and given to the poor." We do not aid our growth to perfection by trying to cast away any of those moral elements of our nature which God has given us; but, by assigning to each its proper place and share in the work, that all, according to the measure of every part, may work its increase, to the edifying of it in love.

Therefore Christ, who knew what was in man, has provided for us accordingly. His words are spirit and life: in his relations with us, he fills at once our understanding and our affections; he is the wisdom of God, and the love of God. He ascended up into heaven; he left nothing that could encourage superstition, yet would he still keep up those personal feelings of love and gratitude and hope in us, which are at once the greatest ornament of our nature, and its best strength to enable it to overcome the temptations of evil. Therefore he declares himself to be ever standing at the right hand of God, to make intercession for us. Therefore he tells us that all power is given unto him in heaven and in earth; that he has received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, and is ever ready to give of this Holy Spirit to them that

ask him. Therefore also he has instituted a particular ceremony, by which we might, at all times, recall to our minds, not only what he is now, but what he was when on earth, and what he did for us; he has willed us to keep alive the memory of his death, till he shall come again to destroy all death utterly. There needs no memorial to remind us of what now is; it is not memory, but consciousness, which is required to show us Jesus by the right hand of God exalted, cheering, purifying, and strengthening our spirits by the daily influx of his own. This should be a matter of constant experience to us; we should feel that he is indeed alive for evermore, because by his grace we are enabled to be alive in our spirits also. But monuments and memorials are needed for the past, to bring again before us, through memory, what exists no longer, but which it is most mischievous to us to forget. And such a monument and memorial of his death Christ wished us to have in the constant celebration of the Lord's Supper. "He, being raised from the dead, dieth no more;" it can only be by memory, therefore, that his death can be brought home to our minds. And if we ask, why it should be brought home to our minds, we must either think very slightly of the state of our own hearts, or have very imperfect notions of what Christ's death was. How can we dare to commune with Christ risen, without thinking of

Christ crucified? If we, in a manner, see God and live; if, with all our faults, and all our unworthiness, God yet calls us his children, and his Eternal Spirit vouchsafes to dwell in us as his temple, why is it, but because our sins and unworthinesses are washed away by Christ's blood; because his death has made atonement for the evil of our hearts, and God may dwell in that place which Christ's sacrifice has rendered clean in his sight.

If this language has become so much language of course to us that we have no distinct apprehension of its meaning or of its force, let us ask ourselves, in other words, if we will, at what time in our lives, or to whom amongst us, the thought of Christ's death is not needed? Each and all of us, the oldest and the youngest alike, may put this question to himself:—At what moment of my life would not the thought of Christ's death be useful to me? Am I sick, or in sorrow? There needs nothing to tell us how welcome it sounds to our ears then. Am I walking, as I trust, in the faith and fear of God, at peace with him, and growing daily in grace, honoured in my generation, and useful in society? Oh, then, how needful is it that I should turn my thoughts to that cross, by which all this state of blessing was purchased for me! What had I been, had Christ not died? Where had been my peace with God? where the progress in godliness which Christ's Spirit has

given? Or, if I am honoured in my generation, and apt to think much of myself for being so, let me remember that cross on which He who did more good to man than was ever done, hung for hours, not thanked or honoured, but mocked and reviled! Again, am I struggling with sin, and find the contest almost too hard for me? Am I hindered, rather than helped in this struggle, by those who are living with me? Am I inclined to be afraid of what they can say or do to me? Then let me look to Christ's death; and think that his blood was shed for those struggling, like me, with the evil within and without them; that he, amid all tauntings, and all revilings, was so much more than Conqueror, that in that very hour he was strong to save those who looked to him for succour;—that even then he could say to the sinner who, like me, implored his aid, "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise!" Or, if I am not struggling with sin, but careless of it; if I am not sick, not sorrowful; but young and healthy, and happy; if my blood flows in my veins so boundingly, that it is an hourly pleasure to be alive; one thought upon Christ's death may be the continuance of this happiness for ever. One thought upon Him, who, when he could have commanded all that earth could yield, chose rather to suffer and to die! One thought of those warning words, with which he repressed the tears of

the women of Jerusalem, "If they do these things in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" Yet, once more, if we are living a life not thoughtless, but over-careful; if it is not our bounding blood, but the intense activity and power of our minds' energies, which is making us to live twenty lives in one;—then, too, how wholesome, how humbling, yet how soothing and how ennobling, is the thought of Christ crucified! Wholesome and humbling; for it tells us that our minds' power could not have prevented us from being in God's sight more worthless than his lowest creature, turning his gifts, as we do, to other ends than his glory; yet soothing and ennobling also; for it speaks of a perfect peace when the exertion of our faculties becomes feverish from its intensity; it tells us of a height to be attained hereafter, so far above all our hopes and notions, that, for the purposes of that divine life, the intelligence which now seems able to compass earth and heaven, will be as useless as we should find for our present life the first feeble and dreamy conceptions of a child.

If, then, at every age, in every condition, the thought of Christ's death is so useful to us, how greatly should we prize the memorial of it! To have it brought again before our eyes, in a sort of living action, to be assembled together round Christ's table, eating the bread and drinking of the

cup, just as the first disciples were assembled, as they ate, and as they drank, on the night when he was betrayed to be crucified. Surely it is our own fault if this communion be no more than the flesh which profiteth nothing, when it may so well become the spirit that quickeneth. It will be that quickening spirit, if it, indeed, remind us seriously of Christ's death. It will be worse than the flesh which profiteth nothing, if we either turn away from it unheeded, or partake of it unworthily. For if we turn away from it, what is it but saying that Christ calls upon us to remember his cross, but we will not; that we love our state as we are, better than the remedies which that cross contains for it; that if we are serving God, we would fain take the merit of it to ourselves; that if we are struggling with temptations, we care not to seek the aid which may enable us to overcome them; if we are laughed at or thwarted in turning to Christ, we are not anxious to be strengthened by him, lest we turn aside and leave him; that if we are in health and cheerful spirits, we would rather think of nothing to make us sober and wise; if our minds are busy and powerful, we are contented to make them our idol. This is what we in effect say, if we refuse to remind ourselves of Christ's death. Or, again, if we receive the communion unworthily, if going only for form's sake, if not seeking really to keep Christ's death in remem-

brance, but trying, as it were, to hallow one day, in order to be excused to our own hearts for getting rid of the thought of Christ altogether for the next month or two, thus at once making our participation a superstition and a blasphemy; then, also, we show that it profits us, and can profit us, nothing; it is the stone which we refuse to make as the corner-stone of our salvation, and which, therefore, if we touch it, will but grind us to powder.

May Christ's grace teach us better things than these; may we go with a true desire to awaken and keep alive in our hearts the remembrance of his death, in all its saving power! May we go, feeling our want of such a memorial, and desirous to apply it to the particular evils or dangers of our own individual souls! May we go, not superstitiously hoping to find a charm in the bread and wine, as if the flesh would profit us any thing; not hoping, I mean, to be spared the necessity of being watchful for ourselves, to be able to pray the less, or labour the less for the future, because we have been partakers of Christ's communion; nor yet let us go with the presumptuous hope that temptations will assail us the less, that sin's power will be subdued within us, that we shall have no more falls, no more broken resolutions, because we have been admitted at Christ's table. We must not hope for this; for so should our conflict cease

before life was over; so should we enter into our rest before yet the sun was down. We must not expect to have no falls, no more broken resolutions, but we hope to have fewer; we must not expect to be freed from temptations, but we may hope to have gained greater ability to withstand them. Let us go soberly and humbly, yet with a lively hope and a strong desire. What are we, that our Lord should admit us at his table? yet, seeing that he does so admit us, is it not an earnest of more that he will do for us; will it not further us in that race whose prize is life eternal? Indeed it was appointed to help us on in that race, to be to our spirits a quickening spirit, by setting before them continually the death of Christ. I have endeavoured to show you how it does this, and how great is the use of it; that it is not a mere ceremony, or intended to act secretly and mysteriously like a charm; but by meeting directly the wants of our nature, and supplying food for its best affections; by so cleaving us from evil, and so disposing us to good, that our hearts may be rendered fitter to receive the gift of Christ's Spirit, and so be quickened for ever.

SERMON VII.

CHRIST'S ASCENSION.

MARK, xvi. 19.

So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.

ALL the great events of our Lord's life on earth, are celebrated in the course of the Christian year. His birth; his circumcision; the manifestation of his birth to the wise men; his fasting and temptation before he entered upon his ministry; and, lastly, his betrayal, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. But of all these, the resurrection has been ever considered the greatest. Easter, in this as in other points, has taken the place of the passover of the Jews, that it is the greatest of all our festivals; it celebrates that event in which, in an especial manner, the whole of Christianity is contained. It is notorious, that the festival of the ascension is, in common practice, now much less

regarded; and to this other circumstances have partly contributed, but it never was considered to be so great a season as Easter, or as the festival of Whitsuntide, which immediately follows it, and which celebrates the descent of the Holy Ghost.

This feeling in the church is a very exact copy of the feeling shown in the Scriptures themselves. Every one must have observed how much more is said in the New Testament about the resurrection of Christ, and the gift of the Holy Spirit, than is said about the ascension. Nay, what is more remarkable, in two of the Gospels, St. Matthew and St. John, there is no account at all given of the ascension; and in St. Mark no more is said of it than the words which I have read in the text. It is only in the writings of St. Luke, in his Gospel, and in the beginning of the Acts of the Apostles, that any particulars are given respecting it. Now this is a circumstance which has often excited attention, and which, when inquired into, becomes, I think, full of instruction.

I suppose that our first impressions are, to consider the ascension of our Lord as the very greatest event connected with his appearance on earth. To our own minds, undoubtedly, nothing could be so solemn, so exalting, as the changing this life for another; the putting off mortality and putting on immortality; and all this we connect with the thought of the removal from earth to heaven.

Above all, here God is not seen nor known distinctly; although he be not far from every one of us, yet we must feel after him, if haply we may find him: here we see him through a glass darkly, in heaven we hope to see him face to face; and, therefore, an ascension into heaven conveys to our minds the greatest change that can possibly be imagined; a change from a corrupt and most imperfect state of things to one of entire perfection. And had Christ been as we are, his ascension would have been spoken of very differently from what it is now; and the account of his resurrection would have been justly deemed incomplete without it. For then his resurrection would have been no more than that of Lazarus; it would have been only a respite from the power of death, not an entire deliverance from it; he would have risen from the dead, but being still as before, mortal, sinful, and corruptible, he would have been no less distant from heaven than ever. This would have been the case with Christ's resurrection, had he been no more than a man as we are. But this was not so; and the difference is expressed by St. Paul, when he says to the Romans, that Jesus Christ was declared to be the Son of God with power by his resurrection from the dead. He rose because he could not but rise; the pains of death were loosed, because it was not possible that he could be holden by them; in fact, to him, if I

may so speak, his resurrection was natural, it was his death that was the miracle of his love. Just before his crucifixion, he had told his disciples, that as he had come forth from the Father and was come into the world, so again he was going to leave the world and return to his Father. His resurrection showed that he had borne witness of himself truly; that he had indeed come forth from the bosom of the Father, from the glory which he had with him before the world was; that he had come for a little space into the world which he had made, to be its Redeemer as well as its Creator. So, then, the resurrection did but declare him who he was; but being what he was, what needs there to dwell upon his ascension? We know that God dwells not upon earth; and if it has pleased him from time to time, in human form, to communicate with his creatures, do we require to be expressly told, that after the time of his manifestation was over he returned again to heaven? Surely, as we need not to be told that Lazarus died again after *his* resurrection, as we know that it follows of course, because he was man, and no more; so we need not to be told, that Christ, after *his* resurrection, ascended into heaven. We know that it follows of course, for the dwelling of the most High God is not on earth but in heaven.

But we are told that he did ascend; and we are told it, if we may presume to say so, chiefly for

the sake of two things that are told us with it. The one is contained in the text: "He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God;" the other is in the Acts of the Apostles: "Ye men of Galilee," said the angel to the apostles, who were watching him as he was taken from them, "why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen him go into heaven." In these two things consists, as it seems to me, the great usefulness of the account of our Lord's ascension. That he ascended, was certain; he whom his apostle had rightly owned to be his Lord and his God, could do no otherwise: he went away, and the Comforter came in his room. But was he henceforward to be lost to his disciples as man? Was he to be thought of as having returned again to that unapproachable light of Godhead, into which neither the eyes, nor the thoughts, nor the highest imaginations of men may dare to penetrate? Is he now, in short, no other than the eternal, invisible, incomprehensible God? Nay, he is Jesus still; he sits at the right hand of the Majesty on high; we may yet dare to image him to ourselves as distinct from that which no man hath seen or can see: "He shall come again in like manner as we have seen him go into heaven;" now and to the end of the world he is yet the Son of Man. O! the infinite depth of the wisdom and

of the love of those divinest revelations of Jesus Christ, both God and man, which seem to so many to be no more than unfathomable mysteries; which some stumble at and reject. Not for nothing, not for the indulgence of a vain curiosity, still less for the purpose of for ever baffling the understanding while they for ever excited its efforts; but for our daily spiritual food, for our strength and comfort amidst our manifold temptations, as a provision for the wants and weaknesses of our nature, made by Him who best knew what was in man, was it revealed to us, that the Son of God became the Son of Man; that he who is yet the Son of Man is also the Son of God. He is at the right hand of the Majesty on high, all power is given him both in heaven and in earth; yet he is not ashamed to call us brethren. He is in heaven as the first-fruits of the resurrection of the dead, at whose full harvest they that are his shall be gathered to the same place where he is gone before. Meanwhile he is in the presence of God for us; there the virtue of his one sacrifice once offered is eternally present; there, through him, all whom his Spirit calls have access without fear to the throne of his Father. In that unknown world in which our thoughts become instantly lost, so different from what we now are acquainted with, that our present knowledge will utterly vanish away, and be succeeded by another faculty altogether, ere we can

understand the things of heaven; still there is one object on which our thoughts and imaginations may fasten, no less than our affections; amidst the light, dark from excess of brilliance, which invests the throne of God, we may yet discern the gracious form of the Son of Man.

He is gone away, to come again in like manner as we saw him go into heaven. And when shall that coming be? We can only answer in his own words,—"Watch; for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh:" whether it be at even, or at midnight, or in the cock-crowing, or in the morning; at what hour or period of the world's great day and night all shall be ended, we know not. No speculation can be vainer than to inquire about the time of that coming, which is known to the Father only. But be the period long or short, our Lord has given us wherewith to occupy ourselves till he does come: he has furnished us with a means whereby, for ever calling to mind his parting from us, we may look more anxiously for the hour of his return. He has given every man his work, and he has told us continually to break the bread and drink the cup of Christian communion, that we may show forth his death till he come. The two go hand in hand together: for the servant who neglects his work will wish to forget his Lord's death rather than to be reminded of it; and he who neglects to keep Christ's death in remembrance, will assuredly

find himself grow weary in well doing; the world will be too much for him, his love will wax cold, and when the Son of Man does come, shall he find any faith lingering in the heart of this careless servant?

Our work is set before us, with the words, "Occupy till I come;" the communion of his body and blood is set before us, with the words, "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come." "Ye do shew the Lord's death till he come," you recall to your own minds, you bear witness to those who believe not, of that night when Jesus was betrayed, when he endured his agony, of that day when he laid down his life for our sakes. Believe me, most divine as is the wisdom of his preaching, most rich in all the treasures of spiritual knowledge as are his discourses and his parables, yet they cannot be rightly valued, they will not bring forth their proper fruit, unless we do full often recall to our minds the still diviner lesson of his sufferings and death. This it is, which learnt, I do not say perfectly, for who has ever found out all that is contained in it? but which learnt sincerely, and up to the measure of our faculties, will be better than all other teaching in the world. This will tell us of life and of death, of sin and of forgiveness, of judgment and of mercy. This speaks louder than any thing else can do, to bid us love one another as Christ has loved us. This sweeps away the fond imaginations

in which we wrap ourselves, of our own worthiness, and dignity, and nobleness; of our high reaching faculties and steadfast purposes; for it tells us that if One died for all, then were all without him dead.

To be convinced in our understandings that this is true; to perceive that faith in the blood of Christ has naturally that great moral power which the Scripture ascribes to it; that it does far beyond all other doctrines tend not to make void, but to establish the law,—this does not seem to me to be difficult: but to advance the one step further, and to have this faith ourselves; to feel from our own experience what before, from the nature of man in general and the plain tendencies of the Christian doctrine, we knew intellectually; this is, indeed, an object for the best labours and the heartiest prayers of us all. We shall be called upon on Sunday next to show forth the Lord's death, by breaking the bread and drinking the cup of Christian communion. Let us eat of that bread and drink of that cup for this very object, to bring home to our hearts Christ's death in all its meaning and power. And let us think, too, that its purpose being to keep alive within us the remembrance of Christ's death, we should neglect no opportunity of joining in it; feeling that there is no surer sign of the imperfect state of Christian dispositions amongst us, than the rare intervals in the year at

which we are now accustomed to communicate. I believe I am correct in saying, that down to the fifth century after Christ, the communion was partaken of by all Christians whom the discipline of the church had not forbidden to share in it, on every occasion of public worship. And now we think it much, in small congregations, if half of the people partake in it four times in the year. True, we may be thankful that the number of those in this congregation who do partake of it, seems increasing; we may and ought to be thankful for this. But O that it would increase much more, and steadily! that they to whom God has given grace once to come to Christ's holy table, would never again turn away from it; that it should not be thought enough to come once! Even of common things there are few, of which being once reminded in the course of five months, would be of much use to us; but feeling how apt we are to forget, and how greatly it concerns us to remember, we should avail ourselves of every opportunity that is offered, being well assured that we shall not, after all, have one too many! Let us come then to Christ's table, to be helped towards keeping him in our memories; that we may bear about with us in our minds the dying of the Lord Jesus, that in our minds the life of the Lord Jesus may be made manifest also.

SERMON VIII.

CHRIST'S ABSENCE.—QUIET TIMES.

[Preached on the First Sunday after Trinity.]

JOHN, xiv. 16, 17.

And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of Truth.

THESE words, when first heard, may seem to belong more properly to the service of the festival of Whitsunday, which has been so lately commemorated by the church, than to that of this day. Doubtless they do belong to that former service also, for they describe the very event which that festival is intended to keep in memory. But there is one particular part in them which seems to be peculiarly fitted for our consideration to-day. The Comforter given on the day of Pentecost, was to abide with the Church for ever; not after the same manner as he was on that day manifested;

not with signs and wonders, to cause fear to come upon every soul; but with a silent and inward power. A few years after the day of Pentecost, and the gifts of the Spirit were vouchsafed no more; the gifts of tongues, the gifts of healing, the gifts of prophecy, the gifts of Divine knowledge by revelation or inspiration, were withdrawn from Christ's people. There succeeded what we are apt to call the natural period of the history of the Church, and which we sometimes distinguish so broadly from the period that went before it, as to place it below the times of the law or of the patriarchs, as if when God appeared to Abraham on the plain of Mamre, or when the cloud was perpetually resting on the ark, it was a more favoured state of things, and one more blessed with God's presence, than the space of more than seventeen hundred years which has passed since the last of the Apostles was taken to his reward. But it was for this long period, and for so much more of it as may yet be remaining till Christ's coming again, that the Spirit of truth was to abide with us: during this long period he has been abiding with us; not seen, certainly, nor known by many even of those who have called themselves Christians, yet not far from every one of them, and ready to reveal himself to them whenever their hearts were turned to desire him.

So as the natural year, divided according to the

order of the Church, bears within it the shadow of that great Christian year of salvation, whose length is from Christ's resurrection to his coming to judgment; this day fitly corresponds with the beginning of the natural period of the history of the Church; that period in which we are still living. The particular festivals are over: the birth of our Lord, his circumcision, his temptation, his death, his resurrection, his ascension, the descent of the Holy Ghost, and all the mercies that God has shown us in our creation, our redemption, and in our sanctification, which were meant to be celebrated together in the great festival of Trinity Sunday; all these are now over, so far as this year is concerned; and from this present day, when the summer is not yet in its prime, on to the season of complete winter, the even tenor of the regular Sunday service is never interrupted. The Sundays are only marked by their distance from the last great festival of Trinity Sunday; in themselves they have no special mark or name. How like to that unmarked period of the Christian Church, unmarked, I mean, by any particular revelation, which has run on for so many centuries, and of which none can tell how far it is yet removed from the season of Christ's great advent!

I know not whether it was designed; but the language of the Gospel for this day seems to me to harmonize entirely with the view which I have

been taking. No words could serve as a better lesson for this natural period, this period unmarked by miracles, or by any new revelations, than the conclusion of the parable of the rich man and Lazarus: "Nay, father Abraham; but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent." Such is the fond yearning of our nature for some miraculous sign; such the way in which we would excuse our want of faith, because we have not seen with our eyes the wonderful works of God. But how earnestly should we bear in mind the answer, put, indeed, in the parable, into the mouth of Abraham, but being in truth, the wisdom of a far greater than Abraham, even of Him who knew what was in man, because he had himself created man: "If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead." We have enough given us; God is very nigh unto us, and if we will not seek him nor see him, because he speaks not to us by miracles, neither should we be persuaded though we had stood by Jesus' side, and seen Lazarus come forth from the grave at Jesus' word; neither should we be persuaded now by any fresh miracle that could be offered, till He who was pierced shall come again in the clouds of heaven; and belief will be then too late.

These are the thoughts generally which seem to belong to this first Sunday after Trinity, this first

of a long succession of weeks unmarked by the occurrence of any of our great Christian festivals. But in bringing this general view down to something particular, it seems to part itself into two divisions. We might inquire how it is that the Spirit of truth is still with us, although we see no miraculous signs of His presence: and this would lead us to the consideration of the Scriptures, and to an attempt to show how we do, in possessing them, possess the perpetual guidance of the Spirit of truth. We might see that here, as in every one of God's gifts to us, we may abuse God's goodness or neglect it; that the Spirit of truth must be sought in order to be found; sought sincerely, sought humbly, sought actively and wisely; that its fruits, equally with the natural fruits of the earth, cannot be obtained without our labour. This inquiry would be full of interest, and ought to be full of profit; and in point of extent, it would be by far the largest of the two divisions into which the thoughts suggested by the text in connexion with this day's service seemed to range themselves. The other division is simpler, and more directly practical, and relates to the use which we should make of the ordinary seasons of our life; of those portions which may be compared to the period of the Christian year on which we are now entered; portions unmarked by any striking change in our condition, and stirred by no ex-

traordinary excitement; portions which, generally speaking, with individuals as well as with nations, form the largest part of their existence.

It will be remembered, that last year at this time many of us were looking forward to a very marked event in their lives, that of their confirmation. The preparation for that event was likely to affect the mind unusually; we felt that something more than ordinary was coming; that we were going in a manner to draw near into the presence of God. To some who now hear me there is certainly the same prospect opened now; but with most of us it is otherwise. We are not looking forward immediately to our confirmation; nor yet will there be an opportunity again afforded us within the next few weeks in this place of partaking in the holy communion. There will be nothing then, in a religious point of view, particularly to excite us; while there may, and will be, probably, excitements of another kind.

Our state then, at this moment, is exactly that of the rich man's brethren in the parable: "We have Moses and the Prophets, and should hear them." We have the ordinary means of grace in our hands, with no peculiarly awakening call, so far as we can foresee, to arouse us to make use of them. No doubt there may be reserved for us, at any moment, a call of thunder, whether to arouse or to confound us. But I wish at this time to set

aside the probability of any such event: I wish to suppose that all things will go on for the next six weeks as quietly and uniformly as they are going on at this instant; that nothing will happen to force any of us to think seriously, if it be not our own habit or disposition to do so. Now let us look a little on this prospect, and ask ourselves how it affects us? Do we—I must speak plainly—do we feel it as a sort of relief, as a permitted space of freedom, during which we shall not be called to the irksome task of looking into ourselves and thinking of death and judgment? Such is human nature, that I fear this feeling cannot be altogether unknown to us. Or do we, knowing our own weakness, grieve that what we fancy is needful for its support, is likely to be for a while withheld? Do we dread the thought of being thus left alone, with much, certainly, to call us to evil, with nothing more than usual to call us to good? Far better indeed is it that we should dread being left alone, rather than rejoice at it; yet how much better still if we felt that we were not left alone at all! But now for those to whom in their very inmost hearts it is a relief, that no especial call to serious thought will immediately be addressed to them; I say, "a relief in their very inmost hearts;" for they would not dare, I believe, even to themselves, to acknowledge in words that it was so: what a state of heart does

it show, that the absence of all especial calls to God should be a relief to it! how clearly does it prove that our love to God is absolutely nothing at all; for no man is glad not to be made to think of what he loves! It is a state of utter death, and which will be gratified more and more continually to its ruin. For if we feel it a relief not to be forced to think upon God, it is a relief which we shall continually enjoy more plentifully; a relief which the heart will make for itself when it cannot readily find it. Let it be that we find these quiet and ordinary seasons a relief to us, and we shall soon become insensible to seasons of excitement; great festivals, solemn occasions, the most touching accidents of life, the celebration of the Christian communion, will all pass over us without making any impression; nothing will break that deep rest of averseness to God which we so dreaded to have disturbed. Our heart's desire will indeed be gratified: we shall see Christ's face, we shall hear his words, no more, so long as heaven and earth endure. We shall not be of the number of those spiritually dead who hear the voice of the Son of God, while to hear it may yet be to live. But shall we not be of the number of those literally dead, who from their graves must hear his voice, and must come forth, not now to hear and live, but to hear and die for ever?

Most dreadful indeed is the faintest show of

that feeling which rejoices to escape from Christ's call. But others do not rejoice to escape from it, but dread to think that it will not force them to listen to it. Do we desire some stronger religious excitement than usual? some solemn occasion to oblige us to think and to pray? some event that may break through the unmoved current of our daily life, and not allow it to stagnate? It is a natural desire, but a vain one. Life will have its tranquil hours, its unvaried days, its ordinary and unexcited feelings. But what then? true it is that one will not come to us from the dead to make us repent; yet still we have the prophets and apostles: let us hear them. How precious are these quiet moments, when we may show our love for God's call by listening for and catching its softest sound! With the world all around us, with death, and sorrow, and care, seemingly at a distance; on the plain road of human life, so far from the edge of the hill that we can enjoy no prospect of the distant country, none of the far off horizon where earth and heaven meet, have we not God's light to guide and cheer us, and God's air to refresh us, and God's work to do? No! God is not far from every one of us; never is the true Christian left alone. There are no especial solemnities calling our attention; is it not solemn enough to live and breathe in this world of wonders? There are no great changes in our life or condition awaiting us

to call forth extraordinary devotion; but what is our daily change from sleep to waking, and from waking to sleep? what is the flight of every day out of the limited number of the days of our existence? And then for opportunities; are they denied us? Does any day pass without Christ's name being presented to our ears, without prayers being offered up in our presence, reminding us of things so great; even life and death, and God and eternity; that if they will not rouse us, by what can we expect to be roused? If the period now before us is indeed to go on quietly, let us be awake ourselves, and then we may be sure that its quiet will have nothing of dulness; that God will be near enough, and the aid of his Spirit abundantly ready, and our progress in grace marked by no obscure or doubtful signs. And then, if so using these ordinary seasons and ordinary means of grace, there should arise any thing extraordinary, if aught of a public or private nature should bring with it an especial warning, how ready shall we be to receive it and to profit by it! How free from confusion and alarm should we receive God's unusual call, when his voice in its most ordinary language had been so long familiar and endeared to us! Then, whether its import was to strengthen us in all goodness, or to wean us from the world by fatherly correction, or to call us to a new and untried line of duty, still we should be ready to receive it for

our good. Our hearts are ever wavering, and ever need God's strengthening hand; but we had not let them become hardened in sin by our neglect: they were weak, but not utterly cold or rebellious. The world wins us all too much; and who does not feel that chastening would be good for him? but even in the midst of the world we had lived with God, and his correction does but help our spirits to rise more freely to him whom they had sought, and had found to be their freedom even amidst their bonds. God may have new and different trials in store for us; but in those which he had given us before, we had found him faithful. So, having Moses and the Prophets, having the guidance of the Spirit of truth, and having daily followed it, we shall not need one to rise from the dead for the confirmation of our faith; but our spirits having been raised up already by Christ's Spirit, we can wait contentedly for God's good time, when the same Spirit shall quicken our mortal bodies also.

SERMON IX.

CHRIST'S ADVENT.

MATTHEW, xxi. 9.

And the multitudes that went before and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David.

LUKE, xxiii. 20, 21.

Pilate, willing to release Jesus, spake again to them; but they cried, saying, Crucify him, Crucify him.

THESE two events took place within a week of one another. And although it would not be safe to assume that all those who cried, "Crucify him," had been amongst those who had so lately cried, "Hosanna to the Son of David:" yet as each of these cries is described as having been the general voice, at the time when it was uttered, there must have been a great many persons who joined, and, most probably, with equal earnestness, in both. The cause, indeed, of the change of feeling is not

difficult to understand. The people received Christ as their King, and expected Messiah; but finding that he did not answer to their expectations of him, that he made no attempt to rouse them against Cæsar, or to call on them to resist paying tribute to the Romans, they soon began to think that he must have deceived them; their old notion returned, that his signs and wonders had been done through the help of evil spirits, and their violence against him was exactly in proportion to the high-raised hopes which his conduct had disappointed.

But all this is but a matter of history: the feelings of the people of Jerusalem, and the causes which led to them, are, in themselves, only a subject of curiosity. The verses, however, which I have read as the text, are something more than historical. The change which they describe is felt by more than the people of Jerusalem: it is one which, within a time as short, is constantly experienced by ourselves. On the Sunday we may be joining, in all sincerity, in the cry of "Hosanna to the Son of David;" and before the end of the week, our hearts may be saying in effect, "Crucify him, crucify him!" A change even more sudden than this was felt by the Apostles, on the very night on which our Lord was betrayed. For after they had exclaimed, in the fullest earnestness, "We believe that thou camest forth from God;"

Jesus said to them, " Do ye now believe? Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, when you shall be scattered every man to his own, and shall leave me alone." And so it happened immediately afterwards, for they all forsook him, and fled.

These, then, are both instances of what we know well enough in general, though in our own case we are for ever forgetting it, that little reliance is to be placed upon feeling, be it as sincere as it will. The faith which a strong excitement kindles, disappointment will soon put out; and who is there but must expect to meet with disappointment? These moments of solemn and raised feeling;—such as the instant of Christ's entrance into Jerusalem, with the memory of his having just freed Lazarus from the bands of death, fresh in the minds of all; or such as when his disciples, knowing that he was so soon to leave them, heard him assert that he was but going to return whence he came; that he had come forth from his Father into the world, and was now going to leave the world, and go to his Father;—these moments, which are full of the divinest happiness to him whose habits of life are consistent, and his fear of God perpetual, are even dangerous to those whom they find, as it were, unprepared to receive them. They are dangerous, although they may be also most salutary; for as a dull and careless soul may,

on the one hand, be roused by such strong impressions, and thus brought, as it never else would have been, to seriousness and repentance; so, on the other hand, it may be roused, and be satisfied with being so: it may be wholly taken up with the great and new pleasure of its actual sensations, and thus may neglect the opportunity of changing them into something substantial and lasting. Then it comes to pass that they soon vanish, and leave the mind in a duller state, and harder to be roused, than when they first visited it.

These thoughts have been brought to my mind by more than one circumstance connected with this day. First, there was the communion in the morning, a strong exciter of good and holy thoughts in those who partake of it; and of thoughts which, in too many cases, do not outlive the day which called them forth. Again, for all of us, whether we have attended the communion or no, the return of this day, with the parts of Scripture chosen for the service of it, is, to my mind, always a remarkable period. The mere circumstance of beginning once again the yearly round of our Sunday services is, to one who notices it, not less solemn than the beginning again of the natural year. And here we commonly do notice it; because it is a period which always marks the near approach of our holidays. Thus much, however, is merely outward; it is no more than what we feel at beginning again

any uniform round, which we have often gone over before; and this, therefore, is a feeling which grows with our years, and with the number and interest of those associations, which are linked with its past revolutions. But there is another point which marks the services of this day more particularly; —it is called Advent, that is, "coming;" and though by Christmas-day so soon following it, it may seem to refer, and does, indeed, historically, to Christ's coming in the flesh, yet the language of the Collects, as well as of the Epistles and Gospels, for all these Sundays, shows that it would lead our minds no less to Christ's second coming, his coming to judgment: and as every year leads us further away from the first, so it brings us nearer to the second. Nor is it without its use to think how many centuries of hope deferred have passed away, since St. Paul wrote the words which were read in the Epistle this morning. Even then they looked forward to that day as close at hand, of whose rising we even yet behold no certain dawn. Yet watching the course of things, since the Messiah first opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers, we see how the purposes of God have been steadily ripening, and how, had the world closed indeed, according to the expectation of the apostolical age, before that very generation had all passed away, its close must have seemed premature. Not, then, as men disappointed, and,

therefore, ready to turn unbelievers;—like those who within six days of their shouting "Hosanna to the Son of David," cried out, "Crucify him! crucify him!" because his kingdom did not immediately appear; but as men watching, with intense interest, some great change, whether in nature or in the fate of mankind, and well knowing that the longer it is delayed, the more overwhelming will be the visitation;—should we look on to the day of the coming of the Lord. Above all, not fainting or despairing if we see wickedness abound, for this has been most clearly prophesied; but if we live to hear worse blasphemy than has ever yet been uttered; if we see the spirit of pride, and the spirit of lewdness, and the spirit of cruelty, and the spirit of ignorance, leagued together more firmly than was ever yet, and producing fruit ten times more accursed than in any former age; know we for a surety that these things must be, and that the more unendurable by any earthly strength is become the burden of triumphant evil, the more surely may we gather that the day of long-suffering is drawing to a close; and that the Lord himself will bare his arm, and deliver his people.

This will, or may, pass through the mind, while we read the services of to-day; we may feel strong in faith, and declare, in the fulness of our hearts, that we do believe; yea, though all men should be offended because Christ delays to ap-

pear, yet shall we never be offended. But if this is no more than an excited feeling, it will not stand the rough trials of life; when petty things crowd about us, the growth of every day's business; when here in our own little world, its objects and interests fill our minds just as much as if they were the objects and interests of a nation; when it is all, if I may so speak, one great plain, so thickly set with objects, that small as they are in themselves, their very nearness and number shut out all view of the far off mountains; how shall we keep within our hearts the music of our "Hosannas to the Son of David," when our tongues cannot be uttering them aloud. I know that I often return to this point; but whether to say the same things so often be, or be not, wearisome, yet it is for the safety both of the speaker and of the hearer to do it;—we all feel the want of it, we all know that we need continually to be renewed in the spirit of our minds, let our feelings in this place, and in our devotions elsewhere, be as strong and sincere as they may. And it is not long since, that I urged the story of Daniel's praying three times a day, as an instance of the need of constant prayer; of moments stolen, as it were, from the very pressure of surrounding business, in which we may turn our hearts and thoughts heavenward, and pray that our feet may be kept straight and our spirits pure. Yet, when I con-

sider what are the faults of the great majority of books and of conversations, it would seem as if the prince of this world should be attacked more immediately in his own dominion; as if our efforts should be especially directed towards fulfilling the spirit of that prophecy, which says that "the kingdoms of the world shall become the kingdoms of the Lord, and of his Christ." Depend upon it, that the enemy of our souls will be quite content to let us pray as *we* will, so that we talk and write as *he* wills. But the common notion is the contrary. For instance, Hume's Essays are spoken of as a dangerous work; but every one reads and recommends Hume's History without scruple. Whereas if men were well accustomed to read history, biography, travels, and works of that supposed neutral character, written in a Christian spirit, they would care little for works like Hume's Essays. It is our judgment of men, and of men's actions, that determines our character; and if this judgment be habitually Christian—if we condemn and approve with a constant eye to the judgment of the Spirit of God, our common habits and temper will be Christian. And what will books of argument against Christ, and against God, do to us then? They will just do nothing; for all that they can show is that we have no certainty for our belief, which we know well enough already; for we live by faith, not by sight; and the cer-

tainty of heavenly things will only appear when earthly things are over. But if we are not Christians in our common judgments, if we judge of history like Hume, it is a very little matter to judge of the evidences of Christianity like Hume also. And this is the mischief of many light publications, which are not considered absolutely unfit to read, because they are neither openly blasphemous, nor openly filthy. But yet the view which they take of life is not that of a Christian; things are spoken of as important, which are of no importance at all; things are laughed at, which as we know are no fit matter for laughter; inasmuch as they are the very things which we find, in our daily life, to be the greatest hindrance to our well-doing. Things are encouraged, which are not sinful, perhaps, in themselves, but which still are dangerous from other circumstances. Amusements which necessarily involve bad company, and which, to the forming character, must be unsafe, even if they could be safely entered into by a formed one.

But what, then, is to be done? for he who would read no history, no biography, no travels, no works of science, moral or physical, but such as are written by Christians, would read, to our shame be it said, but a very meagre and insufficient number. We must read what we find; but it is of the last importance that we carry to the

reading, our own Christian judgment;—it might be no unamusing, and no unprofitable employment, to note in any common work that we read, such judgments of men and things, and such a tone in speaking of them, as are manifestly at variance with the Spirit of Christ. This, if done once, and seriously, with almost any popular work, would produce results absolutely surprising. We should see that the very same writer, who spoke most respectfully and in sincerity of Christ and his religion, yet constantly writes on different principles, seemingly ignorant, and indeed really so, of what the Christian judgment of things is: and we should find such a number of unchristian principles in the course of a common volume, as would soon make us cease to wonder how there were such small apparent fruits of Christianity in the world. And, intellectually, the process would be useful, not only as requiring us to read with attention, but as accustoming us to bring familiarly before our own minds what our habitual principles of judgment are; a matter in which, but too generally, men labour under an utter vagueness. Nor need this plan make us intolerant or exclusive; for the excuse of ignorance is so large, that we dare not, individually, judge the writer, however much we may find to blame or to regret in his book; and it is an evil habit of mind that hinders us from sympathizing with what is good and wise

and beautiful, however much of evil or of folly may exist beside it. Thus, then, we may correct for ourselves what is else a daily snare to us; the being obliged to read so many unchristian writings; and instead of their insensibly dulling the quickness of our moral sense, and bringing us down to their level, they may serve continually to keep alive and in vigour our knowledge and love of better things, and so make our daily studies and our prayers agree with and help each other.

SERMON X.

CHRIST OUR PRIEST.

[Preached on Good Friday.]

HEBREWS, x. 14.

By one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

THE peculiar circumstances of the Epistle to the Hebrews give it, as we might have expected, a peculiar character. For although many points relating to it are, and ever will be, unknown, yet it seems impossible to doubt that it was written to Jewish Christians; and that not only to persons partly of Jewish blood, and acquainted with the Scriptures before their conversion to Christianity, yet, using the language, and, in many points, the customs of the Gentiles; but to those called Hebrews, Jews of unmixed descent, and, like the Jews of the present day, clinging with fondness to

every peculiarity of their nation, to its language, no less than to its ceremonies. And if this be so, would not the epistle addressed to such a class be written in Hebrew? and would not what we now possess be, according to a very old opinion, no more than a translation. For in all points of national feeling, the Hebrew Christians closely resembled their unconverted brethren; and as we are told that St. Paul, at Jerusalem, was listened to with the more attention when he spoke in the Hebrew tongue, so we can hardly doubt that a letter written to Hebrews, in order to secure their favourable reading of it, must have been written in the Hebrew tongue also.

From being addressed, then, to Jewish Christians, in the strongest sense of the term, that is, to Hebrews, this epistle naturally takes a different view of the gospel from that which we find commonly in the other epistles. In the other epistles, indeed, as being addressed, in part at least, to persons who, before they became Christians, had believed in the true God, and knew the Old Testament, the allusions to the Old Testament are frequent; and its prophecies, and generally the system described in it, are often referred to. Still the minds of their readers were not exclusively Jewish; and therefore other views are, from time to time, presented, such as would be more natural to the heathen convert, or even to the

half Greek or Hellenist Jew. But in an address to Hebrews, the gospel was to be considered solely with reference to Hebrew feelings and institutions; and as one of the most sacred of these last was the priesthood, especially as it regarded that most solemn of the high priest's duties, the great atonement offered by him once in every year for the sins of the people, so it was to be seen in what respects Christianity either did away with this institution or perfected it; what, in short, it had to offer to the Hebrew Christian, which, while it filled up the place of his former priesthood, and satisfied those moral and spiritual wants which a priesthood is meant to satisfy, might make it well worth his while to part with his own national priesthood, as being in all respects better and more perfect than that.

In meeting this peculiarity in the circumstances of those to whom it was written, the Epistle to the Hebrews furnishes us, and all Christians, with one most valuable view of Christ's person and office. It represents him as our high priest, and his office as a priesthood; as a priesthood in the two great parts of the priestly character, sacrifice and intercession, or mediation. And it declares also, that this is the only priest, and the only priesthood, which the gospel acknowledges; for he being eternal, and having done once perfectly one part of his office, namely, sacrifice, and being

for ever engaged in doing perfectly the other part of it, namely, intercession or mediation; what room can there be for any other priest? seeing that any other priest's work would be only a vain repetition, if he attempted to sacrifice, or a no less vain and presumptuous imitation, if he were to attempt to add his own imperfect mediation to the perfect mediation ever offered in the presence of God by the one perfect Mediator.

But first, and for this day's service, it seems best not to consider so much how there can be no other priest, or priesthood, save Christ and Christ's, but rather how he is our priest himself: after which, the other part of the subject may find its place more profitably. For the merely saying that there is no other priest than Christ, may be no better than profaneness, unless we know and feel that Christ is our true priest. Nor is there any thing gained in getting rid of superstition, unless we have first established piety and holiness. But if God's grace has once set these up firmly on the ruins of ungodliness and careless sin, then it becomes our wisdom and our duty to take care that they are not, in turn, corrupted and destroyed by the creeping in of superstition.

Christ then, by one offering, has perfected for ever them that are sanctified. By one offering, namely, the offering up of himself upon the cross, as on this day, for the sins of the whole world.

By this offering we are perfected, and without it we were lost. Undoubtedly these few words are the very sum and substance of the gospel;—this, even this which is so soon told, was the message which Christ bade his servants carry to every creature; the message which, whosoever should believe, should live. And verily, whoever does believe it, becomes thereby so manifestly even to our eyes a child of life, that the word of promise seems to need no further assurance: it commends itself so perfectly to our most perfected reason, that we cannot doubt its truth.

And yet it is no less certain that these few words have seemed to many highly unreasonable; they would fain, in some way or other, qualify the simple assurance, that he who believes shall live. They would do so, because by man's fault so many unworthy senses have been attached to the word "believe," that it seems to have no necessary connexion with "life eternal." But whatever words we put in the place of it, seem to me, in some degree, to alter and impair the perfect image of divine truth. It has never been found, that they who, in their care for holiness, have narrowed the freeness of the gospel promise, have thus really secured more holiness amongst Christians: on the contrary, it has been seen many times that they who followed after righteousness have not attained unto righteousness, because they have sought it

not of faith, but by the works of the law, and have stumbled at the great stumbling-stone.

I use these words purposely, because they have been often used amiss, and been made the language of a party; and there is a danger, when any expressions of Scripture, from having been so abused, become connected with unpleasant associations; lest we should rather shrink from them almost unconsciously, and so deprive ourselves of the benefit which, in their own native truth, they can so largely render. The words may, to some, seem the peculiar language of a party; and of a party who, doubtless, are very far from representing faithfully the varied perfections of Christian truth. To others, again, they may seem technical and obscure—belonging to that class of expressions which take hold on the ear and the tongue, but to which the heart and understanding are strangers. What can it mean, they may ask, that they who follow after righteousness have not attained unto it; when Christ declares that every one who seeketh findeth? Or how can our most merciful Saviour be a stumbling-block in the way of his people, to cause them to fall rather than to save them?

The meaning of them is that in which I first quoted them; *i. e.* that those who distrusting God's way of salvation as not being enough practical, try to make it as they think more practical, do, in fact, make it less so: they try to mend the

human heart with a far less powerful remedy than that which they suspected would be ineffectual. That is, if I were to call upon you to be holy, as God is holy, to desire earnestly eternal glory, and to labour to fit yourselves for it, I should be using language far less likely to convert and keep the soul in the right way, than if I were to implore you to believe in Christ, and to accept the gospel promise, that "he who believes shall live." Every heart, however constituted, with all our manifold varieties of power and disposition, can yet find in Christ that which will better suit its peculiar nature than any thing to be found elsewhere; all of us, if we could truly believe in Christ, should assuredly find that our faith had saved us. "Christ, by one offering, has perfected us for ever:" he offered himself up for us all. Believe this; and how necessarily does it follow, that, "if one died for all, then were all without him dead." And undoubtedly there is in this a view of the evil of sin, which, even while we see that it is there, we can never perfectly enter into: it is true, and that we can understand, that if we were dead without Christ, our natures and conduct must be, in the sight of God, evil: we can understand, I say, that this must follow; the youngest here, I think, can understand it, that God cannot be pleased with us if he would have given us no other portion than eternal death. But how far is

understanding that it must be so, from really believing that it is so; from making the truth, I mean, a part of our mind's food, as we do with such moral truths as we do make our principles; from constantly judging of and feeling towards ourselves, as this truth would make us judge and feel. Surely there is in this something so humbling, so overwhelming every notion of self-satisfaction, that if it were believed, and could be taken apart from the truths which God has mixed up with it, we could not live under the weight of it; so depressing, so chilling, so fatal to every sensation of joy, is the abiding thought that we are evil in our Maker's sight, and that, as defiling the beauty of his universe, our only portion is destruction.

Taken apart from the truths which God has joined with it, the belief of this would kill us; but taken with them, how surely will it make us live. We were dead without Christ; but he has died, and therefore we live. Now those depths which before it would have been madness to gaze upon, should be regarded by us constantly and steadily; we have that which will hinder us from becoming dizzy with the gaze. We may now, we not only may, but ought, to fix our minds upon what we were, whilst we, at the same time, think of what we are. So evil in the sight of God, and yet so loved! It is impossible to touch on such thoughts without the most humiliating sense of the utter

unworthiness of our touching upon them; of the painful contrast which they offer to our lives. The following up of all that these ideas contain, must be the work of our own hearts communing with themselves: there is almost a profaneness in embodying it in words, when our lives seem, as it were, to bear such fearful witness, that the words are not spoken in sincerity. For follow out all that is contained in the saying—"Christ, by one offering, has perfected us for ever;" and the language of humility, of gratitude, of thankfulness, of joy, which we could not avoid using, if we would express our mere understanding's apprehension of the truth, would yet appear to belong to a moral sense so fine, and a moral feeling so perfected, that the best of us, well knowing what we are, must shrink from the exhibition of such a contrast.

But even in saying thus much, it will appear, I think, how truly to believe in Christ is life eternal. We shrink from describing the feelings which this belief implies, because they seem to agree so ill with our lives' reality; so true it is, that if we had the feelings, and could not only see how we ought to have them, we should be at once seen and acknowledged by all to be the children of life. And therefore we may all pray for ourselves and for one another, that this belief may grow in us; that we may truly receive, as the ruling principle of our lives, the fact that Christ has died for us; that

each may make it the principle of his own life, saying, " Christ has died for *me*." We know how careless we are; we know how soon we forget the evil of our lives, how fondly we remember the good. We know how the world is ever with us, how alive are all our feelings to its influence, how readily we can be glad or sorry, angry or appeased, full of hope or full of fear, as outward things, and earthly, smile on us or thwart us. And we know also, and all idolatry has been but an example of this feeling, that God is hard to find; that the invisible, the incomprehensible, comes not within the range of our senses or of our minds; over both the condition of our nature has drawn too thick a veil. Therefore we do need a high priest, who may be to us in the place of God, and lead us to God when perfected. Therefore Christ crucified, when we take the words in all their fulness, is all that we need; and without him we are nothing. He is one whom we can understand and love; we can conceive of him in his life; we can conceive of him as crucified: and still, because he is still the Son of Man, we can also conceive of him as risen and ascended into heaven. With him we may commune, for his words are before us; and not only the words, but even he who spoke them: he, through the descriptions of his disciples, is, in a manner, before us too. And when he tells us that he has died for us through the love of

God, what does it not say, both of our own evil and of God's goodness! What does it not say of the danger which is ever near us, and of the safety and happiness in which we may stand, by keeping fast hold on the thought of Christ! He has perfected us; that is, the work is complete, if we would but believe it; but till we do believe it, it is in us not completed. It is complete in us when our hearts are softened, and God, and Christ, and our own sin, are fully before us; but as they pass away, so it becomes again undone. It becomes undone, because then we do not believe; another belief is ruling in our hearts; the belief that we may follow our own ways, and live safely without God. And for how many hours, and how many days, and weeks, and months, does this belief, this belief of evil, this unbelief of good, rule within us! and how naturally does it keep the veil upon our hearts; that veil which, without Christ, will remain on them for ever—the veil between us and God. But when we shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away; when we believe in Christ, we shall also believe in God; when we believe in God, the Father of Christ, we shall know and feel what is meant by infinite holiness and infinite love; and by the one offering of our high priest once offered, we shall feel that we who were dead are made alive—that we are now for ever perfected.

SERMON XI.

CHRIST OUR ONLY PRIEST.

HEBREWS, vii. 25.

He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

IN my Sermon on Friday, I spoke of Christ's Priesthood, especially as it was shown in his sacrifice of himself once for all. The other part of a priest's office is that of intercession; and this part Christ is now performing, and will perform, to the end of the world. But this word, "intercession," must not be understood in that limited sense in which we commonly take it, when we mean by it no more than making a prayer or request in another's behalf. Properly, the whole office of a priest may be expressed by intercession; for intercession means the coming in between two parties;—and as regards a priest, it is the coming in between God and men, to bring them, as it were, into the

presence of God, which, by themselves, they were unworthy to approach. Sacrifice, therefore, no less than prayer, is, in this sense, an act of the priest's intercession: but as from being the greatest act of it, it came to be considered as distinct, so in the text, and elsewhere, intercession means all the acts of a priest's office, except sacrifice; every means by which he introduces or commends men to the favour of God, without reckoning the single means of sacrifice.

In this sense it is that the life of Christ,—not his life on earth in the flesh, but his eternal life since his resurrection,—is sometimes spoken of as being the direct cause of our salvation, even more than his death. "If when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more being reconciled shall we be saved by his life." By his death we were made God's people; by his life we are continued so, even to the end. And the meaning of this is, that through Him we may at all times offer our prayers to God with confidence, and that through Him also we receive that Holy Spirit which alone makes us abide in Him, and in his likeness for ever. For this, I think, is the great act of Christ's intercession, that through Him, and as his redeemed, we receive the gift of his Holy Spirit. And thus he does most fully introduce us into the presence of

God, giving us that wedding garment, that robe of holiness, not imputed only, but real and personal, though imperfectly, without which, all who presume to claim a place in God's kingdom, because Christ has purchased it for them, will assuredly be cast out as false pretenders.

On the other great part of his priestly office, Christ entered as on this day by his resurrection from the dead. And it is no less necessary to come to God through him as our intercessor, and as receiving through him his Holy Spirit, than to come to God through him as our only and perfect sacrifice. So that, in all our relations with God, Christ, our High Priest, should ever be present with our minds, as alone giving us access to God, and alone purifying our hearts by his Spirit. In him we have all that we need; and as he is our Priest, without whom we have no boldness to come before the throne of grace, so he is our only Priest, and all others who do in any way pretend to be priests like him, are thieves and robbers, from hearing whom, may he, by his Spirit of truth, save his true sheep for evermore!

But I may be asked why I dwell upon this? Are these the times, or is this the congregation, which require to be warned against priestcraft and superstition? We may be careless, profane, proud, it may be, and rebellious; but surely we are

in no danger of falling into the errors of a past time, and paying to the ministers of religion too great respect and obedience.

In one sense this is certainly true; there is no danger of our again witnessing those political usurpations, or that extreme degree of spiritual tyranny, which the ministers of the gospel once ventured to exercise. And certainly it would be very unedifying to take up one moment of our time with dwelling upon past evils. But superstition and profaneness almost always go hand in hand: in the doctrines of superstition, there is, if I may so speak, a superstitious tendency, and a profane one; and those who feel little of the effects of the first, may yet be in great danger from the last. And thus the superstition which made Christ's ministers priests, may be, in the superstitious part of it, harmless enough to us now; that is, we are in no danger of giving money to buy a priest's absolution, or of giving to him an unreasonable authority over our lives and actions. But the profane part of the doctrine is showing its effects very generally amongst us, and very fatally, in the notion that we are not ourselves brought near to God; that there are some of our brethren screening us, as it were, from his eye, employed by him in his service, and bound to hear and to do all his commands; but that we, who are not his peculiar ministers, who stand, as it were, in the back

ground, and who hope that he does not see us, may escape with a less punctual observance, and may be forgiven if our distance hinders us from hearing all his words, or from thinking that we are bound to learn them and to obey them.

Is this no evil now? is this not common everywhere? is it not most common even here? How gladly do very young boys persuade themselves that their age keeps them in the back ground; that they cannot be expected to hear and to obey all the words of God. How gladly do older persons fancy that they, not being ministers of Christ, may be permitted to live less strictly; that religious matters are not their business; that they are not active members of the church, whose good and evil are necessarily mixed up with the good or ill state of the body to which they belong; but according to the favourite phrase, "Friends to the Church," disposed to befriend it, though it is not properly their own concern, and therefore naturally claiming praise, as if for a disinterested support of a useful society. They seem, if I may be allowed the expression, to look on themselves, at most, as honorary members of it, lending it the sanction of their name, and wishing well to its objects; but by no means considering that it is their own concern and their own business, that they are engaged for life or death in its welfare.

This gross profaneness, this abandonment of our

Christian privileges and duties, has flowed directly from the superstitious error of making a broad and perpetual distinction between one part of Christ's church and another; of making Christian ministers priests; of putting them between God and the people; as if they were to be in some sort mediators between God and their brethren, so that he could not be approached but through their ministry. The profaneness has followed from the superstition, according to a well-known fact in our moral nature;—that if the notion be spread, that out of a given number of men some are required to be holier than the rest, you do not, by so doing, raise the standard of holiness for the few, but you lower it for the many. This has happened in the case of oaths; for men, inculcating that perjury was a much worse sin than falsehood, have by no means promoted the cause of truth, but the contrary: they have not led them to scruple greatly at falsehood, and still more at perjury; but to think perjury no worse than they ought to think falsehood, and to think falsehood without perjury a very light offence, and one which they commit with little hesitation.

And, therefore, without the smallest reference to former times and obsolete errors, or to high and theoretical questions of theology, there is no truth more important and more deeply practical, than that of Christ being our only priest; that without

any other mediator or intercessor, or interpreter of God's will, or dispenser of the seals of his love to us, we each of us, of whatever age, or sex, or condition, are brought directly into the presence of God through the eternal priesthood of his Son Jesus; that God has no commands for any of his servants which are not addressed to us also; has no revelation of his will, no promise of blessings, in which every one of Christ's redeemed has not an equal share. He speaks to us, not through the ministry of others, but directly: his message is in our hands, and it is ours to read it and to receive it. True it is, that it is hard to conceive a Christian standing by himself in his relations to God: that this is not so, is shown above all other proofs, in the institution of the Holy Communion; we are to communicate there, not with Christ only, but with our brethren. But we all being many are one body, and Christ is our head: we all, through no aid of any one particular portion of our body, draw near through the blood of Christ to God. Where two or three are gathered together in Christ's name, there is all the fulness of a Christian church, for there, by his own promise, is Christ himself in the midst of them.

Nor let any confound with the profane superstition of a priesthood, the reverent ordinance of our church and all other Christian churches, that the ordinary ministration of the communion is com-

mitted to Christ's ministers. That is most fit, most excellent, as a rule of order and decency, that they who minister, should especially wait on their ministry in the very holiest act of our Christian brotherhood. But they minister not as distinct from their brethren, but as being of their number; they give no holiness to the communion, which is holy by Christ's ordinance, and because it is the communion of his body and blood. They give nothing, but Christ gives all; and they and all their brethren receive alike of his fulness. Therefore, it is so great and solemn a blessing, that we communicate with Christ without any mediator; with God, through the mediation of Christ only. A great blessing it is, but a great charge also: we cannot lay our sins, or our ignorances, or our carelessnesses, upon any other men; they cannot bear them, nor atone for them; the account must remain our own for ever, to be cancelled only by our own personal faith in Christ our Saviour. All the work to be done is our own; all those things of infinite height and depth; God, and Christ, and life eternal, or sin and eternal death, are brought before our own minds, for our own full consideration and decision of them. Let me explain one moment what I mean. So much is there of this grievous error of a priesthood lurking in our minds, that it is very common to hear people speaking of the doctrine of the Trinity, for example, as of a

very awful mystery, with respect to which they would be at once very much shocked if they were to hear a minister preach any thing erroneous; and yet are very far from thinking themselves bound to consider it fully, and to make use of it for themselves. And therefore, whilst in their judgments of others for any supposed errors on this point, they display all the uncharitableness of superstition, so in their own practical study and use of the truth, they show the cold and careless spirit of profaneness. True it is, that in all truths relating to God, there is much which we cannot understand; but what is revealed truth concerning him, must, by the very force of the terms, be capable of being understood, or else it cannot be called "revealed;" and not only of being understood, but of being used for our soul's benefit. So it is with the Trinity. What there is connected with it, which is above human conception, that is, of course, hidden alike from us all; but that which is revealed in it, is revealed alike to all; it is the salvation of the humblest amongst us, no less than of the highest of Christ's ministers. The truths of that creed which was read this morning, either belong to us all, if they be, as truly they are, the very foundation of our Christian life; or if they be a fond repetition of unintelligible words, they belong to none of us.

Earnestly then, may we implore you, the young-

est not least, that you try steadily to impress on your minds your Christian privileges and responsibilities; for the two ever go together. Each one of you is called by Christ himself, to come unto God through him; not to look out for another to stand between you and Christ. The aid of Christian ministers is variously granted: it may well happen that some of those who hear me may, in the events of life, be placed in situations where this aid may be denied them; they may either be out of the reach of any minister, as has been the case sometimes abroad, or circumstances may hinder them from deriving any benefit from him. But remember, that wherever Christian ministers may be, you are never without God, and never without your great High Priest, through whom, every day and every hour, you may have access to God. Prayer is yours, and yours is the promise of the Spirit, and yours is the blood of the covenant; and what do you need more? These are yours to use for your salvation, or to forfeit for your ruin: you may not decline the trust committed to you, for God has given you his own Son to be your priest and mediator, and he will not have you, like the idolaters of old, seek after one of man's devising.

SERMON XII.

CERTAINTY OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION.

LUKE, xxiv. 34.

The Lord is risen indeed.

THIS truth, which was received by those who first heard it with wonder at least equal to their joy, has been repeated to us so often, from our earliest childhood, that we hear it without its exciting in us any strong sensation whatever. It rests, as it were, quietly in our minds, neither disputed nor doubted, nor yet truly believed. It is like a fact of common history; a part of our knowledge when we are reminded of it, but one which we rarely have occasion to draw forth from the storehouse of our memory. We are not aware of its importance, of how much is wrapped up in it, to perish if this corner-stone of our faith could by any means be moved. We have not noticed the pecu-

liar manner in which it is spoken of by the apostles; and how different it is from all the other miracles recorded in Scripture. For they might stand or fall with no consequence to our eternal hopes, so long as this single one remains sure; but if this one could fail us, all the rest would profit us nothing. If Christ be not risen, our faith is vain, we are yet in our sins; and they who have died in the faith of Christians, have ventured their souls upon nothing, and have died to rise again no more.

The importance of the resurrection of Christ is a thing which we must each learn for ourselves; it will not be felt by our being assured by others that it is important. But few persons of any education reach the age of manhood without having an opportunity to learn it, whether they choose to avail themselves of it, or to neglect it. I mean that there is a time, even before we commence the active business of life, when we are led to hold question with ourselves, and to ask what we are living for, and to what are we tending. It need not be either sickness, or any great calamity, which will lead us to this state; the same effect may be produced by happiness of an unusual kind, as well as by suffering. Nay, it need not be produced by either, nor by any remarkable outward circumstances; it may be merely the natural effect of our own minds, feeling their powers, and keenly

alive to the wonderful aspect which life wears, even when regarded in its common course of events. But be the exciting cause what it may, the effect is almost sure to occur: we commune with our own hearts, and think of life and death, and ask ourselves what will be our condition when sixty years are over; whether, indeed, we shall then have died for ever, or whether we shall but have fallen asleep in Christ, to be awakened by him when the number of his redeemed is full.

It is then that the words of my text assume a very different character to our ears; then it seems no slight, no ordinary blessing to be assured that the Lord is risen indeed. That vague belief in our immortality, with the expression of which we are so familiar, will do well enough for our careless and prosperous hours, when nothing assails it; but it is too weak for a season of real trial. It has been truly observed, that those ancient writers who have written most eloquently and beautifully of their hope of an eternal life, appear to have found little real comfort from it, when the evils of this world pressed them hardly. And this seems to me no other than what might have been expected; for the natural arguments in favour of an eternal existence may be met by other reasons on the contrary side; and in a matter of such moment, when we practically feel its importance, a mere preponderance of

probability on one side more than on the other, is far from sufficient to satisfy us. What we see outweighs so hesitating a decision of our reason; if we have ever witnessed death, or still more, if we have witnessed that distressing decay of body and mind together, which often accompanies old age, we shall find, that abstract language about our immortal and imperishable minds will ill stand its ground against positive experience. We see that the mind does suffer from the decay of the body; it appears before us returned to the same helpless and powerless state from which it first started in infancy; so that it may seem to have run its full course, to have done its appointed work, and to be ready now to become extinct for ever. But the word of Jesus, confirmed by his deeds, sets our anxiety to rest. He was dead and is alive, and he has promised that they who live and believe in him, shall be with him where he is, that they may see and partake his glory.

Therefore it may be useful to furnish ourselves beforehand with the certain proofs of Christ's resurrection; not, perhaps, so much for our satisfaction at this present time, as for our use when the season of trial shall actually be come upon us. For in this respect religious knowledge is often useful, even when it seems for the time to be most thrown away. There have been instances,

as is well known, of persons who had received in their youth instruction, to which they then paid no regard, but which, in later life, when they had been taught to value such knowledge, was ready at hand to serve them, merely because, though inactive hitherto, as far as practice was concerned, it had yet retained its hold on the memory. So it may be with regard to the proof of our Lord's resurrection. It may, at present, be but a barren knowledge; and yet, as it is a thing easily remembered, it may possibly come seasonably to your aid, at a critical time hereafter, when the rebellious will is trying to persuade the understanding to sanction its departure from the obedience of Christ.

It should not be forgotten that our Lord had, in his lifetime, declared that his rising again from the dead was to be the great sign of his being sent from God. He told the Jews, when they asked for a sign, that no sign should be given them but the sign of the prophet Jonah: he told them at another time, when they asked him the same question, "What sign showest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things?" "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." He said the same thing to his disciples, in more express terms, both before his last journey to Jerusalem, and on the last evening before his betrayal. This appealing to his resurrection beforehand, is

one of the points which hinder us from regarding it in the light of an extraordinary coincidence. For it is not only the simple fact of a man having been raised from the dead, which constitutes the importance of Christ's resurrection, but that *he* should have been raised, who, when he was speaking the words of more than human wisdom, and doing the works of more than human power, had appealed to a still greater work which he would do upon himself, as a proof, for those who believed not his other works, that he did truly come from God.

This, then, is one of the points which makes Christ's resurrection so important, because he had foretold it beforehand, and made it the sign of his being really sent from God. Another point which makes it more fitted to be such a sign than any other of his miracles, and which therefore also tends to increase its importance, is, that it was performed upon himself. The common belief of that time was, that whatever power a man might have gained by magic, lasted only during his lifetime; he might, perhaps, have been enabled by it to delay his fate, to save himself from many dangers, which, to others, would have been fatal; but if he could once be killed, the spell was broken, and the evil spirits whom his charms had bound to serve him in his lifetime, were at once released from his control. Hence the earnest

wish of the chief priests, when they had heard of the miracle of the raising of Lazarus, to put both Jesus and Lazarus to death: if they could take Jesus and kill him, that would put an end to his magic arts; and Lazarus might then be safely put to death also, without any fear of his being raised again. Hence the exultation with which these same chief priests called out, when they saw our Lord actually on the cross, "He saved others, himself he cannot save: let Christ, the king of Israel, now come down from the cross, and we will believe him." And if they thought this, who believed that his miracles wrought in his lifetime were real, although they ascribed them not to God, but to the power of evil spirits, much more must it be the belief of those who, in much later times, have denied the reality of the miracles altogether, and ascribed them to mere contrivance and fraud. Mere human fraud, we know, cannot survive the grave: let a man be ever so ingenious, let him practise his arts ever so skilfully, yet no one has ever yet found the art which could deliver him from the grasp of death.

Such being the importance of our Lord's resurrection, beyond that of any other of his miracles, it remains only to show the certainty of the fact. The fact of his resurrection implies two things; that he was actually dead, and that he was alive again after having died. The latter point was the

only one which was disputed in former times: it was the original account given of the matter by the Jews, that his disciples came and stole away his body. But it is a remarkable instance, both of the force of truth in the long run, and of the sounder spirit of criticism which prevails in modern times, that this objection is now generally given up. As men have become better acquainted with the laws of historical evidence, they have found it absolutely impossible to question the testimony of the evangelists as to the appearance of our Lord, at different times, after his crucifixion. No one who pretends to be a judge of human character can doubt the perfect honesty of the narrative in the two last chapters of St. John's Gospel: and admitting the honesty, it is equally impossible to doubt the truth of it, as to the fact of our Lord's showing himself to his disciples after he had been crucified. But it is pretended now, that he did not actually die under his crucifixion: that the appearances were those of a living man, not of one risen from the dead[a]. And here what I have said before, as to the importance of the resurrection, and its having been foretold by our Lord in his

[a] On this subject I have a melancholy pleasure in referring to the "Letters to the Editor of the New Trial of the Witnesses, by an Oxford Layman," by a man in whose untimely death not his friends only, but his church and country, have sustained a loss not easily to be repaired.

lifetime, becomes an essential point in the argument. Admitting that, if we knew none of the particulars of the story, the mere fact of a man surviving crucifixion is not impossible, still it is a great improbability; so great, that I am not aware of a single instance of there being such a fact on record, except in cases where it was the intention of the parties to save the life of the sufferer, and he was taken down avowedly before life was extinct. But where the death of the sufferer was so peculiarly important to those concerned in it, as in the case of our Lord; where he had himself appealed to his rising again as the proof that he came from God; and where his enemies trusted to prove, by his death, that he had not come from him; it becomes an improbability beyond all calculation, that an event in itself so extraordinary, should happen in the very case where its occurrence could not fail to be considered as miraculous; in a case where, above all others, care would be taken that it should not happen, because the importance of its consequences was so clearly foreseen. And surely it would have been nothing short of a direct interposition of Providence, an interposition in itself commanding our belief in Christ's divine commission, if the malice of his enemies had been thus wonderfully baffled; if he, by whose death they hoped to prove that his former mighty works were not wrought by the help of God, was enabled

to escape out of their hands, under circumstances which, humanly speaking, rendered his escape impossible; to satisfy his apostles that he had escaped, and through that very fact to spread his doctrines from one end of the world to the other, thus turning the devices of his enemies into the means of his perfect triumph.

Truly, if even this had been so, we might well have believed his word when he declared that he came forth from God. But the truth of the evidence before us repels our belief of this wonderful interposition to establish an interposition yet more wonderful: it proves, beyond all doubt, that Christ properly died. In the first place, the centurion and soldiers appointed for that very purpose examined the body, and found that it was dead: yet, to make sure of it, so little was their inclination to make a false report in order to save Jesus, one of them pierced his side with his spear—the Roman pilum—the shaft of which was four inches wide, and which made, therefore, a wound so large, that, as appears afterwards, a hand might be thrust into it. And what name shall we give to the improbability of supposing, that in addition to the double improbability of any one surviving crucifixion, and, above all, a person under our Lord's circumstances, we have the further improbability, or rather, what is in itself an impossibility, of a person surviving such a wound, inflicted for the

very purpose of ensuring his death, in the most vital part of the human body? Further; the body of Jesus, after having been taken down from the cross, was laid in a cave in a rock, bound round with linen cloths about his body, and over his head and face, in a manner which would have ensured death by suffocation, if he had not been dead before; and watched by a guard of soldiers. And yet, within eight and forty hours afterwards, he was seen not only alive, but in perfect strength and vigour, presenting himself to Mary Magdalene, in the garden, in the morning; to two of his disciples, at Emmaus, six miles distant from Jerusasalem, in the afternoon; and to his apostles at Jerusalem, in the evening; not as a man saved by miracle from dying of wounds, which must, at any rate, have left him in a state of the most helpless weakness, but as he was in truth, the Son of God, who had overcome death, and who retained only so much of his earthly nature as might prove to his apostles that it was he himself, Jesus, who had been crucified, Jesus, who was now risen to live for ever.

I might go on further, and ask, if he were not truly risen from the dead to die no more, and therefore to ascend, as the Son of God, to his own place in heaven, what became of him afterwards, where did he live, or with whom did he conceal himself; since we know that his own mother

passed the rest of her days in the house of John, the beloved disciple of her Son, to whose care Jesus had himself commended her while hanging on the cross? But the time would fail to go fully through the whole tissue of monstrous impossibilities which we must believe if we refuse to believe the simple words of Christian truth,—that Christ died and was buried, and rose again the third day, and ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father. Most monstrous are the impossibilities which we must believe, if we will not believe the truth; most perfect the consistency, the probability, and the beauty, of the truth in Christ Jesus! But I said that the certainty of this truth might, to many of you at present, appear of little interest: you think that you believe it already. Do you believe it indeed? Then why do so many live as though Christ had neither died for them, nor yet was risen? The certainty of the resurrection of Christ is indeed our best comfort when we fear death, and hate our sins; but is it not equally terrible to us when we do not fear the one, and when we love the other? He rose to save his own, but to judge the world, and to destroy his enemies. And of a truth it may be said, and the dreadfulness of the word is the best proof of their dreadful state to whom it applies, that for those who do not believe, for those to whom Christ's resurrection is no

joy, it will indeed grind them to powder; good would it have been for them if Christ had never risen, if this Easter Day, which all Christians so love and cherish, could be blotted out of the list of time as though it had never been.

SERMON XIII.

MORAL CERTAINTY OF THE TRUE CHRISTIAN'S RESURRECTION.

1 Corinthians, xv. 18.

Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.

These seem strange words when taken apart from what goes before and follows them; and I wish them to press upon our minds in all their strangeness. It would be well indeed if they appeared not only strange, but monstrous; the most unlikely, the most impossible thing which our minds can conceive. If we fully dwelt on them, and were quite aware of all their monstrousness, then our faith would stand far surer than it commonly does stand, and through that faith we should gain an undoubted victory over all the temptations with which we now find it so hard to struggle.

The Apostle means the words of the text to express what is most shocking and most impossible.

It is the most impossible of all the consequences which would follow if there were no resurrection of the dead. "If there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen. And if Christ be not risen, our preaching is vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ, whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not." This is one very shocking and unlikely consequence, that men should be found false witnesses concerning God. For what men say concerning God, surely they would say truly; they would not dare to speak falsely of Him who is truth itself. But yet some have so dared; else there would not have been so much folly and so much wickedness taught at different times under the name of religion. Again, if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins. That, too, would be strange and shocking, that men in the honesty of their hearts should have followed what seemed to them a way of salvation, and yet should have been disappointed. Yet it might have been God's purpose to try their faith for a long season; and though their first hope had been disappointed, yet they might still have learned, before they died, that there was another hope which should not fail. "But if there be no resurrection, then they also who are fallen asleep in Christ are perished." And

this indeed would be so shocking, that if this were truth, truth itself would change natures with falsehood; it would be our duty and our best happiness to believe a lie. If they who had lived all their days in patience, and self-denial, and love, had done all this for nothing; if they had set their hopes upon a fond dream, purifying their hearts, and enkindling their best affections with the thought of Him to whom they were nothing, and who was nothing to them; if the only good men in the world should prove to have been the only foolish ones, the only ones who had lived in vain, then, indeed, our language and our very nature seem confounded; it would be well with us if we and all around us were but the creatures of a dream.

Now if this sounds so monstrous even to our outward ears, when we have had, perhaps, no experience in the matter ourselves, what, think we, must it be to those who have had experience; to those who have lived, and are living, in real daily communion with Christ? Tell them that they are wasting their labour; that their prayers are offered to one who cannot hear; that their hope is fixed on one who died, and is dead still, who can neither save them nor himself; that their discipline of their thoughts and tempers to become like Christ is a fond labour which the first access of a brain fever or of bodily decay will render for

ever useless; that the patience and resignation with which they suffer under God's hand is nothing better or wiser, and will do no more for them, than a spirit of hardness and obstinate pride; tell them, that the sin which they so fear, the holiness which they so desire, will, in fifty years hence, be no better and no worse the one than the other; that He, by whose mighty Spirit they have been enabled to do and bear so much, is no more than a phantom of their own minds; and see if any inconsistency, any contradiction most revolting to our natural reason, was ever received with such instant, such overpowering conviction of its falsehood, as the word which should say to such true servants of their Lord, that they "who had fallen asleep in Christ were perished."

But many of us, who feel our faith to be weak, and whose lives show that it is so, have in their own case no such argument of experience on which to rest it. God has ordered, that those proofs of the truth of the gospel, whose force the mere understanding can perceive, even with no moral experience, should be enough to justify the good from the charge of credulous folly in believing, and to convict the bad of unreasonableness in rejecting, what has so much ground of reason for its truth; and if true, brings to them so infinite a condemnation. But we only deceive ourselves and others if we say that such proofs as these,

when left to stand by themselves, as addressing our understandings only, are capable of keeping alive our faith, or of reviving it whenever we choose, after a long habit of careless living. We have allowed all the difficulties in the way of our faith to become strong by our own wilfulness; we have not known God ourselves by loving him, and therefore it does not seem to us so impossible that we should go on without him for ever, even as we have gone on so long, and are going on without him still.

Now, all such persons lessen by their conduct, both for themselves and others, the argument for belief in the resurrection: they so live, that when they are gone, it would not seem in any way monstrous to think that they were perished for ever. By "perished," I mean what the word means in the text; that is, were become as though they had never been born, and were vanished into nothing; for it does not of course signify, as it sometimes does in other places of Scripture, "the existing for ever in misery." And therefore it may be truly said, that there are many persons of whom we could believe after their deaths, without its seeming any way shocking or impossible, that they were perished; that they had lived out their time, and were now gone for ever. Nor will it be unprofitable for us, as we review some various classes of this description, to inquire of ourselves, whether

we belong to any of them; whether we are among those of whom all who knew them, must say at once, that when they died, they had fallen asleep in Christ, and therefore that it is not possible to think of them as "perished."

It will appear immediately, that none of the classes to be here mentioned will contain the worst specimens of human wickedness. There are crimes so dreadful, there is a guilt so deep, so long continued, and so successful, that even the heathens, by their natural sense of justice, supposed that it must be punished after death; that the judgment which had not visited it on earth, must be reserved to fall more heavily in another state of being. It would be monstrous to suppose of such persons, that at their deaths they had escaped all punishment; that they were gone to as deep a rest as the most innocent of their victims. We need not therefore dwell upon these; and in fact, instances of this kind are so little apt to come within the walls of a church, that it is vain, and worse than vain, to spend any of our time speaking of them; for it may only make our actual hearers pleased and satisfied with themselves, when they are told of a class of persons whose wickedness is so much greater than their own. I pass therefore to persons of a very different sort, such as may well be found here, without coming either in open defiance of God, or in mere hypocrisy.

Let us first, then, consider those who are represented under the image of "the light stony ground," in our Lord's parable of the sower. Consider that large number of persons in whom the seed has no root; who live without thought of what they are living for, to whom the comforts or the amusements of their daily lives supply all that they care for, or who, in another station of life, having few of these comforts, and still fewer of the amusements, think of nothing so much as of getting as much of both as they can, and as often. Look at such persons in their early years, and in their manhood; how seldom do any deep thoughts seem to possess them; how completely do they live in the society around them, speaking its words, listening to its opinions, doing its bidding, instead of their own or God's. Can we see any thing in them which does not find its proper food in the life that now is; and why then should it be monstrous to suppose that there was no other life reserved for them? They have given some pleasure in their day, and have received some; the sun has shone, and they have enjoyed it; the clouds have gathered, and they have gone on in the hope of their breaking again. They have filled a place in society not unamiably; but they have, in turn, shared the enjoyments of society; and others are now coming forward upon the stage, better able, from their time of life, to give and to receive its pleasures.

What language can address them so naturally as that of the heathen moralist, who told such as they, that they had played, and eaten, and drunken, their appointed portion, and that now it was time for them to be gone? There are thousands of creatures to whom God has given, as to them, their span of life and enjoyment, which, at his pleasure, he takes away. These all have lived, and are perished for ever; and where can we find in the lives and natures of careless or worldly men, any greater fitness than in these, or any more eager longings for immortality?

But go far higher, and let us take even those whom the parable describes under the comparison of the thorny ground, where the ground was strong and brought forth plentifully; but its crop consisted of thorns and briers as much as of the corn, and by these the corn was overgrown. Take those whose lives are actively and usefully spent, who promote the physical or the intellectual good of their neighbours, who live respected and admired, and leave behind them, in the works which they have done, an enduring monument of their usefulness. Yet, even with regard to these, the supposition in the text contains no startling absurdity; for still it may be said that they have had their reward; that their faculties and desires seem to have found their proper exercise and gratification in this life, without looking for any other state

of being. They served their own generation, and their own generation gave them in return its tribute of love and honour; they left works which should benefit after ages, and after ages have requited them, by holding their names in undying memory. As long as the earth and its inhabitants exist, they will be remembered with gratitude; and when these shall pass away together, and their memory be blotted out from under heaven, the greatest of their benefactors may be well content to become extinct also. Nay, even in the case of those whom fortune has persecuted, who struggled in vain in defence of the good cause, and who gave their lives for the welfare of their friends or countrymen, still the end of their being seems to have been fulfilled; and whilst yielding to the common lot of mankind, they died with the consciousness of having done their duty, and with the sure hope of being held up, in after times, for an example to others, and of enjoying a lasting meed of glory. There is nothing, as it seems to me, incomplete in the lives of such men; nothing in their sufferings for which, in their own estimate, earth could not furnish an abundant compensation. And therefore, even for them, I see not that there would be any thing strange or monstrous in the thought that their lives were ended for ever, and that the noblest things of this earth, no less than

the fairest, must perish, when the earth itself shall melt away.

That this is so, our common language and feelings afford a proof. For amidst all the love and admiration which we bestow upon such men when living, or the honour with which we cherish their memory when dead, we are not apt, I think, to fancy them as receiving more than such a human tribute; we do not connect them in our fancy with that band who follow their Saviour wheresoever he goeth, and rest not day or night in giving glory to their God. On the contrary, such ideas are ill suited to our thoughts concerning them; the natural judgment of our minds decides at once, unasked, that their reward is of another kind. And if ever, in the language of eloquence or poetry, we speak of them as exalted to heaven, yet the heaven which we so venture to name, is but the heaven of heathen fancy; we dare not invest it with any of the images of scriptural truth. We may fondly talk of such men as dwelling in bliss, and looking down with regard upon the world which they had benefited; but our tongues dare not so belie our hearts as to speak of them as having access, through the blood of Jesus, to the presence of the Father, and of enjoying eternal communion with God and with Christ.

But take again a third class of persons, who yet,

like the other two, are dwelling constantly in the midst of us, whom we have seen and known—I trust, also, have admired and loved—and look at their lives, and think of their deaths, and then how infinitely impossible does it seem to conceive that these can have perished. So true is it that God is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for all live unto him. Once think of any one as devoted to God, as living principally in relation to him, and it becomes as difficult to conceive of such a one that he is perished, as to conceive of any other that he will not perish. For here we have a man possessed with faculties and with affections, that nothing on earth has satisfied or can ever satisfy; his life is imperfect; he seems to have been cut off most untimely, if that God, whom here on earth the very best men can only see, as it were, through a glass darkly, shall never be known to him more fully. And when we see such a man living to God continually, putting aside the objects which other men live for, and manifestly setting before himself another object, namely, the love of God in Christ;—when we see him going on quietly, attracting no great notice or glory on earth, yet ripening continually in all goodness; suffering with cheerfulness, labouring with unwearied zeal, meek and forgiving, temperate, yet not severe; making the best possible use of earth and earthly things, yet ever looking beyond them;—it is manifest that

his conversation or citizenship, as St. Paul calls it, is not here, and that if the grave close on him for ever, he who has lived better than any other class of men, will alone, of all men, never have reached the haven which he desired, nor attained the end of his being. It is like those foreign plants, whose flowers and fruit will not come to perfection in our climate; but whose natural strength and beauty make us feel only the more sure that they must have, elsewhere, a better and more genial climate of their own.

And conceive further of one who, thus loving God in Christ, has been chastened by his fatherly hand in a long course of severe suffering. Conceive, amidst the gradual weakness and decay of the body, which made earthly enjoyment utterly impossible, a growth of every humble and devout and affectionate feeling no less regular; a trust in God, and a child-like love of him, drawing, as it seemed, its strength and nourishment from the very trials of his fatherly correction. Conceive this going on for years, the bodily suffering becoming more and more intense, the spiritual health and vigour becoming more and more perfected. Conceive this going on for years; yet having begun so early, so completely cutting short in the bud all earthly prospects, that even at the very close of the struggle, the sufferer was still in the opening, rather than in the prime of youth.

Conceive such a one, so young, so suffering, so sanctified, finding in the very last hour no abatement of pain, but a fearful increase of it; yet, while they who stood by were most distressed, and most wishing to relieve it, the faith and love of the sufferer were never clouded, and the trust in Christ, and cheerful submission to his will, never for a moment shaken. Conceive this; and shall not heaven and earth pass sooner, than that one so sleeping in Jesus, should not also be raised up by the Spirit of Jesus, and presented by him before the throne of his Father, to live for ever in the fulness of his blessing?[a]

If there were many such, faith would scarcely be faith, but would be almost changed into sight: so great, so visible, would be the assurance of God's power and goodness in those who believe; so evident would it be, that his Holy Spirit thus largely given, was, indeed, but the earnest of an eternal inheritance. But each of us may, in our own selves—nay, we must, either add to this evidence or lessen it; we must either so live, as that it shall seem nothing extraordinary if our thoughts and desires being earthly, they and we should perish when earth perishes; or we must so show forth

[a] Lest some should possibly suspect here a different allusion, it is right to say that this passage was written with reference to a young person who died at Rugby, in the early part of the year 1834.

the grace of God, and so live to him, as to make it manifest that he is our God, and we are his people, that our lot is cast with him, and that nothing in the world can be so monstrous or impossible as for one of his children to perish.

NOTE ON SERMON XIII.

It has been my endeavour in this sermon, in imitation, as I think, of the manner adopted by the Scriptures themselves, to express fully the particular view of truth with which the text was concerned, without entering into such other views as might be necessary to guard against opposite errors. I have argued, that none but true Christians can have a fair expectation of eternal life; that to other men, it would be nothing unnatural if death were to be the close of all. I have spoken here of death as opposed to life, not as expressing a life of misery; and I have left the great consideration untouched, as not concerning my immediate object, that as reason tells us that none but true Christians can hope to live for ever, so we have cause to believe, from God's word, that all but true Christians will be miserable for ever. But I do not think that our natural reason would have ever enabled us to discover what Christ has revealed, that good left undone will be positively punished for all eternity, as well as evil done. The careless, and what we call harmless livers, cut off by reason from the hope of eternal happiness, are condemned by revelation to an eternity of positive misery. It is undoubtedly one of the peculiarities of revelation, that it threatens with the heaviest punishment not only committed evil, but omitted good. A better proof of this cannot be given, than by contrasting our Lord's warnings against riches, with the sentiments of one of the characters in Plato's Commonwealth, Cephalus the father of Lysias. Christ's words are known to every one, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of heaven." Cephalus is represented[a] as feeling comfort in his old age from the possession of wealth, because he was not tempted to the commission of those acts of fraud or violence which might be visited with punishment after death. Cephalus was glad to be rich, be-

[a] Plato, de Republicâ, I. p. 331.

cause his wealth saved him from sins of commission: our Lord denounces riches as dangerous, because they tempt to sins of omission. But this high view of the evil and danger of negative sin is, I think, peculiar to revelation; and though most reasonable, when judging of things from Christian premises, would not suggest itself to our natural reason, which has but very inadequate ideas of God's penal government.

SERMON XIV.

CONVERSION.

LUKE, xxii. 31, 32.

And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not; and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.

WE have occasion to observe in many places of the New Testament, that our Lord Jesus Christ is made to stand in the place of all Christians, so that what happened to him is a sort of image, as well as a pledge and assurance of what will happen to his true servants. He suffered and died; and we can none of us expect to escape what our Master did not escape: he rose again, so surely implying by this, that they who are his should rise likewise, that St. Paul does not hesitate to argue, that if there is no resurrection of the dead, then is not Christ risen: we are in a manner so wrapped up with him, that if we are not to rise, he cannot

possibly have risen: if he is risen, we shall most certainly rise also. But as our Lord himself is thus put in the place of his people, so also does it often happen with our Lord's first disciples. What is said to them, and of them, is said in very many cases to all, and of all: I do not mean only so far as regards general principles of life, or our common hopes as Christians; but even what may seem to belong to the apostles personally, as so many individual men, relates often to Christians of after times, standing towards one another, and towards their Lord, in the same relation as the apostles did then.

A remarkable instance of this is given in the words of the text. They were spoken to Peter of himself, and the other disciples then seated with him round the table of their Lord. They contain a warning, a comforting assurance, and a solemn charge. And wherever two or three Christians are gathered together to the very end of the world, this same warning, this same assurance, and this same charge, may be equally addressed to them also.

And first for the warning—"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat." We must remember, that the word "you" is not used here in the sense of our common language, that is, to express a single person. Our Lord does not say that Satan had de-

sired to have Peter only, but all the apostles; this is perfectly plain in the original, and, indeed, to an attentive reader, it is no less plain in the translation; for the translators never use the word "you" in rendering addresses made to a single person, but always the proper singular words, "thee" and "thou." Satan then had desired to have all the apostles, that he might sift them as wheat. The sense is expressed nearly in these words of our Lord, spoken on the same evening, as recorded by St. John; "Do ye now believe? Verily, I say unto you, the hour cometh, yea is now come, when ye shall be scattered every man to his own, and shall leave me alone." The hour was coming, when their faith was to be severely tried, when they were to be sifted as wheat, to see what in them was good corn, and what was chaff. For this seems the meaning of Christ's expression; "Satan hath desired to have you, as he desired of old to have Job given up to him, that he might try him to the utmost. And so he will now try you, for it is God's will that you should be tried, that so being found faithful under trial, God may be glorified in you, and your crown of life may be the brighter."

This was Christ's warning to his apostles; and to all Christians since, in however small a body they may be assembled, the words may be addressed with equal truth; "Satan hath desired to

have you, that he may sift you as wheat." And this his desire will be granted; we shall assuredly all be tempted according to the measure of our strength; not beyond it certainly, yet fully up to it. Nor does it matter much at what period of our lives we apply the warning, for they can never be otherwise than true. They will be sometimes more true than at others; there will be to each of us seasons of extraordinary trial at some one part or other of our lives, when the strength or weakness of our characters will be most decisively proved; but still, no single day is without its trials, no state of life is free from them. If we feel, as we surely must feel, that during no one day, I had well nigh said, during no one hour, of our lives, is it always easy to us to be good; if we are sometimes too lively to think soberly, sometimes too indolent to act vigorously, sometimes too selfish to think or act for others, but bestow our care chiefly on ourselves, then we know that Christ's word is true, that every day Satan desires to have us, that every day he is sifting us like wheat.

But now let us mark Christ's comforting assurance: "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." This is spoken of Peter particularly; it is, "I have prayed for *thee*," not "I have prayed for you;" but though these words speak of Peter only, yet we have the assurance elsewhere, that it is true of us also. Nay, on that very same evening, when

he thus declared that he had prayed for Peter, we know that he prayed for the other apostles too, and not for them only, but for us also. "I pray for them," he says, speaking of all his apostles, except Judas; "I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from evil." "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also who shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us." We are sure, therefore, that Christ prays for us *all*, that our faith fail not; that though temptations will and must come, yet that we may be able to bear them. And why do we think that it was revealed to us that he so prays for us? Surely it was meant as an assurance of comfort. But the very word comfort supposes some trouble to be comforted; just as the word rest supposes that there must have been some exertion to require it. It is idle to talk of comforting those who do not mourn; it is idle to talk of encouraging where there is no fear and no anxiety. But Christ's words, and it is true not in this place only, but generally throughout the Scripture, are for those who need them. "Come unto me all ye that travail and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Come unto me, all ye that grieve and struggle with, and are exceedingly dismayed at, your temptations, and hear from me the comfort-

able word that I am praying for you, that your faith fail not. Now, then, be no more cast down, but struggle with a confident hope of victory, for greater is He that is with you, than he that is against you. Labour to keep the assurance of your faith like a jewel unto the end; and by labour, through the gracious mediation of my prayer, you shall keep it."

We must consider this, however, a little more. The warning undoubtedly belongs to us all: "Satan hath desired to have us, that he may sift us as wheat." Can we *all* equally claim the assurance of comfort? Can we each say, "Christ prays for *me*, that *my* faith fail not?" For all Christians generally, that is, for Christians of this age, as well as of that of the apostles; for Christians here or in America, as much as for Christians of Jerusalem, or Corinth, or Philippi, it is most certain that he does pray. But the individual question for each of us, "Does he actually pray for me?" is not answered so immediately. They are Christ's express words, that for some he does not pray: "I pray not for the world, but for those whom thou hast given me, for they are thine." Now, in one sense, we are not of the world; but in another, perhaps, we may be. "He is not a Jew who is one outwardly," says St. Paul; and it must be true, no less, that "he is not a Christian who is one outwardly." That is, he is a Christian in one

sense of the word; all the outward means of grace are his, and men may not dare to call unclean or common what God, by bringing outwardly, at least, within the number of his chosen people, has in a manner pronounced to be clean. But in another sense, he is not a Christian; his own spirit must bear him witness that he has not Christ's spirit, that he has therefore not got Christ's seal, and cannot claim any interest, as yet, in that peculiar prayer, which Christ utters for those whom the Father has given him, and sealed with his Holy Spirit. His own spirit must bear him witness, he knows, that he has not the mind of Christ; that he is not grieved by his temptations, nor is earnestly resisting them, but is careless about them, and yields to them without much effort. He knows full well that he is not troubled or cast down; that, therefore, he does not need encouragement or comfort; and that what he does not need, he may be very sure Christ has not given him.

For such an one, then, Christ does *not* pray that his faith fail not. The blessing, at this moment, is *not* his. But what then? He is shut out now: but as yet, "to him that knocketh it shall be opened." He has not the seal of the Spirit now; but if we, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto our children, how much more shall our Heavenly Father give his Holy Spirit to them

that ask him. As yet, God has more than one blessing to give; they who are last may still be first. So soon as we feel the grief, we begin to have our share in the comfort; so soon as the spirit of penitence and of holy fear shall possess our hearts, and lead us to say in sincerity, "Lord, help me!" then He, who searcheth the hearts, recognises in us the breathings of his own Spirit; then Christ prays for us, that our faith fail not. Brethren, if there be any of us for whom he does not pray now, may he see in us such a contrite heart, before the sun go down, that he will pray for us as for his true disciples!

But I must not lose sight of the exact words of the text: "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not; and thou, when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethen." I said before, that in these particular words, all are warned of the coming danger; but one is especially prayed for, that, being converted himself, he might also strengthen his brethren. These words were addressed to Peter; and if we read the first twelve chapters of the Acts, we shall find their fulfilment. There we find him, indeed, strengthening his brethren, passing throughout all quarters, and by signs and wonders, by the word of wisdom, by fervent boldness and love unfeigned, convincing the unbelievers, opening the eyes of the ignorant, baffling the threats of the enemy, enlightening,

cheering, and comforting his fellow-Christians. But this also was said, not to Peter only, but to us. In every society there are those like him, to whom it may be said, "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." There are, and always must be, some who have more influence than their neighbours. Age gives influence, money gives it, power gives it, station in society gives it; and supposing all these points equal, yet, still men cannot be equal altogether, for then personal character gives it. Nothing can hinder firmness, and wisdom, and virtue, from exercising an influence over the minds of those who witness them. There must, then, be some everywhere, to whom Christ gives this solemn charge, "When thou art converted, stengthen thy brethren." Every advantage which we have over others, makes us subject to this charge. If we are older, we should strengthen those who are younger; if we have the ascendancy given by strength, and activity, and decision of character, or by general ability, or by consideration of whatever sort, then we, being converted, should strengthen our brethren; we are answerable not for our own souls only, but also, in a certain measure, for those of others. And this is a point which especially concerns us here. Every one of us who becomes awakened to a real sense of what it is to be a Christian, has a double call upon him, to save himself and his brethren also. You may say, How

can we do this? How can we,—if we have no advantage of age, or situation, or great talents, or force of character,—how can we influence others? I answer, that the Spirit of Christ is still the spirit of power; that to this day, signs and wonders follow them that believe. I do not mean that you can bid the blind see, or the cripple walk; that you can drive away the stroke of sickness, or bid the dead arise. But never yet did any soul turn sincerely to Christ, but the spirit of power was there. Goodness is power, and ever will be. Steady and consistent goodness, whether in young or old, in rich or in poor, must enjoy an influence, must make itself felt amongst those who see it; must, in some instances, I do not say in all, or in the majority, for the miraculous gifts of healing extended to few only amongst many sick; but it must, in some instances, open the eyes of the ignorant or thoughtless, bid the crooked walk uprightly, abate the fever of selfish and violent passions, nay, arouse the dead in trespasses and sins, till he is awakened and lives. Assuredly, the leaven will spread, the leaven must spread: not so fast, or so surely, alas! as the leaven of wickedness; yet, to a certain extent; they who are truly converted themselves, always, I believe, multiply the number of Christ's servants; they do find themselves enabled to strengthen their brethren.

And if the evil leaven be here of exceeding

power, if evil influence be nowhere caught so readily, is it not so much the more needful, that all they who love the Lord Jesus Christ, should go forth between the living and the dead, and endeavour to stay the plague? Perhaps the very words, "go forth," require to be changed in our case: there should be nothing forward, nothing pretending, for that would rather defeat its object. I should dread nothing so much as our being talked of for a great show of religion; I should fear that there might be less of the power of it. By a show of religion, I do not mean, God forbid that I should mean! a fearless reverence and love for God and the things of God, a fearless enmity to evil, and fondness for good. But I mean peculiarities of language and manner; any thing that is too artificial to suit well with your age, which, above all other times of life, requires a manner simple, straightforward, and natural. And even where there are these blemishes, they are by no means inconsistent with the power of godliness in ourselves, but they interfere with it in others; they make us less able to strengthen our brethren, because they excite a needless prejudice against us. This, however, is of far less consequence than that there should really be a spirit of true Christianity among us, anxious for our own souls and for those of others. If it is the first, it will be the last; for he who knows what God's service is, can-

not but be eager to teach it to others. And whether he succeeds with many or with few, two things he may be sure of; that as, on the one hand, they who hear will never be so many as those who refuse to hear, for the gate to life is ever narrow, and the way to destruction broad; so, on the other hand, his labours will never be utterly vain. Some fruit it will surely find; and infinite is the good, and infinite the glory, of having brought even one sinner to repentance.

SERMON XV.

PROSELYTISM.

MATTHEW, xxiii. 15.

Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.

THEY who are not familiar with the universal extent of God's revelation, with that peculiar mark of its divine original, its providing against opposite dangers with equal earnestness, although not always at equal length, inasmuch as one, though not less fatal than the other, may be less common: they may be surprised to find in the New Testament such words as those which I have just read. It may seem strange that the Founder of a religion, which was, in one sense, to owe its whole existence to proselytism, should thus strongly condemn the zeal of making proselytes; that he,

whose disciples were to labour to convert every soul, and bring it into Christ's family, should speak of persons converted from one religion to another, as being made worse than their teachers; or, as it may be implied, worse than they themselves had been before. But these words of the text, this condemnation of the Scribes and Pharisees for their spirit of proselytism, contain one of the most useful of lessons, standing, as they do, along with so many others in praise of the spirit of proselytism. We should bear in mind together the two sayings of our Lord, which so beautifully accompany one another: "Go, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;" and, "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves."

Now, if we were to put these two passages so close together before some interpreters, and many readers of Scripture, they would find nothing at all remarkable in them. They would say, that Christ enjoins Christians to make proselytes to Christianity, because it is the truth; and that he condemns the Scribes and Pharisees for making proselytes, because they brought them over to a system of error. And, accordingly, they would regard the warning as having nothing to do with themselves, nor with

any one who is endeavouring to spread the belief of the great truths of the gospel.

It is by this method of interpretation, this catching at names and losing the substance, that we deprive ourselves of half the benefits of the Scripture. And it is remarkable, that it was the very system of interpretation actually adopted by those very Scribes and Pharisees whom our Lord is in the text condemning. They condemned their fathers for killing the prophets, and supposed that the judgments denounced in their Scriptures upon the sins of their fathers, had no relation to them. For, they argued, our fathers worshipped idols, and neglected the service of God, and profaned his Sabbaths; and then, in conclusion, they shed the blood of those holy men who warned them of their sin and danger. God, therefore, cast them out of their place by a most just sentence, even as he had threatened them. But what is their case to us? We have turned from idols and serve only our fathers' God; we honour his name and reverence his sanctuary, and his Sabbaths we observe with most scrupulous care. Those of his saints whom our fathers disobeyed or persecuted, we sincerely honour. We know that God spake to Moses; we hope to hear his voice ourselves through the mouth of his faithful servant Elijah, whom he has promised to send to us again. All the pro-

phets, from Samuel, and those that come after, we reverence their name, we believe their words: the judgments which they speak of came upon our guilty fathers; the blessings which they promise, may be looked for by us, who serve the Lord in truth and earnestness.

Such was their language, and such the way in which, taking hold of names, and not thinking of the spirit and substance, they lost for themselves the use of that word of God which they daily studied. And Christ tells them, that they may well speak of those who killed the prophets as having been their fathers, seeing that they were in heart, as well as blood, their true children. With different words in their mouths, there was the same spirit; and they who built up the tombs of the prophets, were but filling up the measure of the sins of their fathers, by whom the prophets were slain.

So exactly it is with us, if we think that the substance and spirit of our Lord's words is to be found, on the one hand, in the names of baptism, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; or, on the other hand, in the names of Scribes and Pharisees. We may proselytize to truth, and they may have proselytized to error, and yet it may be a woe to us no less than to them, that ever we did proselytize; nay, our proselytes, though made proselytes to the

holiest truth, may yet become, by the very act of their conversion, in a worse state than they were before.

But when I speak of the Scribes and Pharisees having proselytized to error, I am needlessly weakening my own argument. They made proselytes to truth, in the same sense in which I used the word just now, when speaking of the proselytizing of Christians. For what does Christ say of them, but that sitting in Moses' seat, their instructions were to be observed, though not their actions? These Scribes and Pharisees taught their proselytes to believe in God, to hope for eternal life, to flee from idolatry, to believe in the Scriptures, and to keep the Law. What we call the truths of religion, so far as they were then revealed, were all taught by them. It is not correct, therefore, to say that they made proselytes to error in the common sense of the word; theirs was not like the proselytism of the Sadducees, who would indeed have made converts to error, by teaching men to deny the great truth of the resurrection of the dead. But the Scribes and Pharisees taught the truth; and, therefore, the censure which falls upon their proselytism, may, with the same force, apply to ours.

Some who have followed me thus far, may, perhaps, think that there is little in all this that concerns them: that nothing can less need to be

mentioned in this congregation than the danger of religious proselytism. And this is very true; and yet the objection would arise out of that same sort of literal interpretation which I have been just condemning. For the substance of our Lord's warning does not relate to the particular matter in which proselytes are attempted to be made, but to the manner and spirit of making them. He is not speaking of the dangers of religious proselytism in particular, but of all proselytism, although his example happens to be taken from religious proselytism. And, therefore, if we were a congregation of the most worldly-minded persons conceivable, still we should no less need the warning of the text. For the evil complained of is, that men, in preaching or insisting upon truth, do it not so much for the sake of truth as of themselves, their own triumph and their own glory. That thus, even while recommending what is really true, they mix up with it much besides that is not true, which still they inculcate with no less earnestness. That as they proselytize with unworthy motives, so those who join them do it from unworthy motives also; that in both the love of party gets the better of the love of truth; and the attachment of the person proselytized is much more to the men whom he has joined, taken in the mass,—to their honour and to their interest, with which he has mixed up his own,—than to that portion of

truth, be it less or more, which, as one amongst many peculiarities of their own body, they accidentally, rather than with sincere affection, continue to propagate.

Taken, then, in its very essence, the warning of the text is against binding others, or allowing ourselves to be bound, by other ties than those which God has sanctioned, or in a greater degree than he has sanctioned. For while we should render to all their dues, yet we should be careful to know what is due, and not to give more. Our relations claim our love; our parents and our country claim not only love, but duty, the service of our bodies in *suffering*, if need be, even to the death. But the service of our bodies in *doing*, the surrender of hand, heart, and mind, to work, to love, and to reverence,—the pledging ourselves heart and soul to the cause, so that its friends are our friends, and its enemies our enemies; this is due neither to parents, nor to country, nor to any human party, nor sect, nor society, nor cause; it is neither due to them, nor can it be given them without great sin; for we are Christ's, and Christ's only, and Christ is God's.

This, followed up into its details, and where is the department of human life to which it would not apply? Where is there not a blind and a selfish reverence paid to the ties which our own hands have made, either on a great scale or on a small.—

an undue zeal for something which is not Christ's but our own; and, what is yet worse, a greater regard to these earthly ties, than for that great and only tie which should fully control us, the communion of the Holy Spirit of God? This is a general evil, which might be dwelt on in one or other of its particular forms, according to the circumstances of particular congregations. In its form of religious, or national, or political party spirit, we have little to do with it here; but in another form, and one suited to our circumstances, it exists here as much as anywhere. Ties are attempted to be thrown over every one who comes amongst us, if, indeed, they have not been thrown over him earlier; binding him, by a supposed chain of honour, to the particular society into which he is entered; so that their honour and their interest, according to their own notions of both, are to become his law: he must resent supposed insults offered them; and if they do evil, he is bound, if not actually to join in it, yet to conceal it, and in no way to endeavour to put it down.

It is this sympathy with the members of our own particular society, without always distinctly keeping it in subjection to our stronger sympathy for God's law, which is the cause of so much evil. It is what we see sometimes exhibited amongst the poorer classes with respect to the law of the land; whatever crime may be committed by one

of their own class. they shrink from having any hand in bringing him to justice, because their notion is, that it is betraying one of themselves. We see exactly that here is the mischief of the spirit condemned in the text. A man who has committed a great crime is yet considered as one of themselves, not as one whom they are to love for Christ's sake, and as a member of a society in which he is one, but as one of themselves according to an evil and unhallowed union which he abhors, an union which leads men to each other because they are alike in worldly condition, and teaches them to regard this as a greater bond than the love of goodness and the hatred of wickedness. I have given the instance in the name of the poorer classes screening each other from the law of the land; but you know that it is exactly the same feeling which makes boys combine together to screen one another from the laws which affect them, and to help one another sometimes in breaking them.

It is astonishing how much mischief is done by a deceitful word. "We must not desert our companions;" that is the sort of expression which characterizes the proselytism in which the proselyte is made twofold more the child of hell than his converters. Companions in what, or for what purpose? Accident has thrown us together in the same place, it is true; we eat. sleep. and live under the same

roof, or within the same town. But this is but a poor reason for union of heart or feeling, although it is great reason for showing kindness and civility. If we think of what is more than a mere accident; if we look upon each other as companions in a better sense, that is, as having a common work and a common interest, then it becomes us to consider well what this work is, and what this interest. Is it to help one another in evil or in good? Is it to assist one another in maintaining the liberty to do what is base or wicked, to live in idleness, to get in debt, to be thoughtless, extravagant, or sensual? If this is the work for which we are companions, then, indeed, it is a companionship which the language of the text will best describe. They who are led into it, and they who lead them, become the children of hell together.

But surely we are companions in a better sense than this, and with a companionship wherein Christ himself may be one. There is before you a common work and a common interest, in which you may be fellow-workers with Christ, and fellow-reapers; sharers of his labour, and sharers of his glory. There is a common work to which you are all leagued, that the society to which you belong should be in reality what it is in name, a school of Christian education; there is a common interest, that all evil should be put away from among you, inasmuch as it hinders you each and all in follow-

ing Christ steadily. This is a true companionship, a Christian communion, in which there is ample room for the exercise of all, and far more than all, the good points which can ever exist in those evil communions, for good nature, for mutual kindness, for preferring each the other and the welfare of the whole to his own; but which admits of nothing narrow-minded, nothing contentious, nothing which is a breach of our true and heavenly communion, nothing which leads us to excuse, to endure, to become accomplices with evil. For in this true companionship, whatever is against Christ is also against our union; we are no less false to one another than to him, if we do not endeavour to put it down. And to bring over any to such a companionship is no less than to fulfil Christ's command, while we effectually avoid incurring the danger of his warning. It is conversion, not proselytism; and as in the spirit of human proselytism both are accursed together, he that proselytizes and he who is proselytized: so, in this true conversion to the companionship of Christ, he who is converted has saved his soul, and he who has converted him, shall shine as the stars for ever and ever.

SERMON XVI.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION.

[Preached in Rugby School Chapel, on the Founder's Commemoration.]

DEUTERONOMY, xi. 19.

Ye shall teach these my words unto your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.

THIS is the simplest notion of education; for, undoubtedly, he is perfectly educated who is taught all the will of God concerning him, and enabled, through life, to execute it. And he is not well educated who does not know the will of God, or knowing it, has received no help in his education towards being inclined and enabled to do it.

Stated in these words, I do not know that any one would much dispute the truth of this description. But when we come to unfold it, and try to arrive at an accurate knowledge of it in detail,

we find room for very great differences of opinion, such as have given birth to various controversies, and to many different systems in practice. These, of course, it is not my purpose to enter into; but it may not be amiss to show how a description, seemingly so simple, can lead to all these differences, and what it is which so often perplexes men's notions when they come to speak of education.

Now the origin of these disputes arises, in a great degree, from making a division such as we find in the prayers used in other places of education, and partly also in that one which is in daily use here; a division, namely, between "true religion" and "useful learning." For men's ideas of what is "true religion" being thus very much narrowed, the point in which all were agreed became greatly reduced, whilst a new and very important one was introduced, on which men might greatly differ. It was thought that the great and allowed end of education was sufficiently fulfilled by what was called teaching the Bible; that thus we should know God's will respecting us, and be also disposed to practise it. But here the study of the Bible being considered as synonymous with "religious education," it followed, on the one hand, that all those things which were necessarily taught besides the Bible, in colleges and higher schools, were looked upon as distinct from religion; and, on the other hand, that they who held "religious educa-

tion" to be all that was needed as a matter of necessity, taught, in schools for the poor, nothing but the Bible.

This will sufficiently show how the great disputes about education are consistent with men's admitting that definition of it which I gave at the beginning of my sermon. All but the Bible became debatable ground, and its greater or less usefulness was asserted or denied on all sorts of different principles, men seeming to suppose all the while that religious education was not concerned in the dispute. And thus I have no doubt that it has been with perfect sincerity in the minds of many of its supporters, that a system of education has been set up, which professes to leave religion out, and yet to teach history, political economy, law, and moral philosophy. It is said,—" We do not profess to interfere with religious education,—*that* we leave to the parents; we merely wish to give education in science, both physical and moral." I have no doubt that this was, and is said, in a great many cases, with perfect sincerity; the more so, because it quite agrees with the opinions of another set of persons, to whom I alluded before, and who, meaning to give a religious education, teach the Bible only. It is manifest, that both these classes of persons go upon the same ground, namely, that religious education is to be given only out of the Bible; and

that in perfect consistency with this notion, one class wishing to educate only religiously, teaches no history; and another class, while teaching history, believes that it is wholly abstaining from religious education.

Now, if we consider a little what were the circumstances of the Israelites, and what the extent of the words spoken in the text, it will help to throw some light upon this subject. "Ye shall teach these my words unto your children." What words do we think are here meant? Was it the Ten Commandments, as given on the two tables from Mount Sinai? Or was it the five books of the Pentateuch, as we now have them, from Genesis to Deuteronomy? No such thing; the special thing meant to be taught, was a knowledge of God's statutes and ordinances; not the Ten Commandments only, not all the early history of their forefathers contained in the book of Genesis, but God's law given to them his people; his will respecting them morally and politically; his will with regard to all the relations of private and public life; with regard to their government, their limits and divisions, their property real and personal, their rules of inheritance, their rules with regard to marriage; their whole conduct, in short, in peace and in war, as men and as citizens. All this was laid down in their law; all this was carefully to be taught them in their youth, that so, in

whatever line of life they might be thrown, or whatever questions might be agitated, they might know what was God's will, and therefore might know and do their own duty.

Such was the wide extent of that word of God which was to form the religious education of the Israelites. But now, mark the difference with us. Our church teaches expressly, in agreement, I believe, with all other Christian churches, "that the law given from God, by Moses, as touching ceremonies and rites, does not bind Christian men; nor ought the civil precepts thereof to be received of necessity in any commonwealth." Accordingly, it is notorious that there are few parts of the Bible with which persons in general are so little acquainted, as the book of Leviticus, and those parts of Numbers and Deuteronomy which contain the civil and the ceremonial law of the Israelites. Nor is this to be wondered at; for although this law contained God's will for his people of old, to conduct them in the various public and private relations of their lives, it does not contain his will for us under the like circumstances. What we retain of this law is the moral part, that is to say, the broad general principles upon which we should act, and a knowledge of certain actions from which we should abstain. But the application of these principles to our own times and circumstances, in an infinity of questions, remains to be sought for.

Yet this application contains God's will for us in our generation, just as it did for the Jews. But for them, the Bible contained both the rule and the application; for us it contains only the rule.

Nor can we find in any other part of the Bible what is no longer furnished us by the law of Moses. Principles of life we find in the utmost possible perfection; notions as to the relative value of our several qualities and duties; warnings drawing our attention to the very points with regard to self-government, which we are most apt to neglect, such as the value of time, and of opportunities of every sort, and the great guilt of neglecting them, and of contenting ourselves with doing no harm. But the application of all these rules is still left to us; the precise line of our duty, with regard to those manifold subjects which surround us on every side, is not declared to us in so many words in the Bible. To give one instance out of a great number. What can be more important than our duty with respect to the poor? What more clear and strong than the general commands in the Scripture, to consider their welfare? But can we find in the Scriptures the precise manner in which, in this country, and at this time, their welfare will be best promoted? Do they direct us immediately as to the preference which should be given to one scheme rather than another, both professing, and both intended to

effect, the same object? It is quite manifest that other knowledge, and other studies, must teach us the application of God's general rules to our particular case, as their own law, which did contain this application in its civil provisions, taught it to the Jews.

Thus to put ourselves in a condition to comply with the words of the text, to instruct our children fully in God's will, and enable them to execute it, we must bring in some other knowledge, and other studies, not to be found in the Bible, to make up for that part of the Bible which gave this instruction to the Israelites, but which gives it to us no longer. And hence it is clear, that neither is the Bible alone sufficient to give a complete religious education, nor is it possible to teach history, and moral and political philosophy, with no reference to the Bible, without giving an education that shall be anti-religious. For, in the one case, the rule is given without the application; in the other, the application is derived from a wrong rule. If, indeed, history were rigorously nothing but a simple collection of particular facts; if the writers made no remarks on them, and the readers drew from them no conclusions; there might, indeed, be no reference to a wrong rule, and the study might be harmless, except as a waste of time. But as this is not, and cannot be, the case; as almost every writer of history does

comment upon his facts, and reason about them; and as all readers, even when they cannot be said to draw conclusions from a history, are yet sure to catch some moral impression; so it becomes impossible to read and think much about human actions and human character, without referring both to God's standard, and yet at the same time to avoid separating off a large portion of our moral nature from the guidance and habitual sovereignty of God.

I thought that thus much might be said with propriety in this place, for the subject is one which we all have to do with; and though I do not expect that all will have taken an interest in, or been able to follow the view which I have been giving, yet the ability to do so certainly exists in a great many; and, perhaps, the statement may not be altogether uninteresting. Some, perhaps, have been puzzled,—at least, I know that the difficulty has been felt in other instances,—how to reconcile with a profession of religious or Christian education, the devotion of so much time to studies not supposed to be religious, and certainly not in themselves necessarily Christian. Now the reason is, because the words of a rule are much sooner learnt than the power of applying it universally; and that whilst the Scripture itself alone furnishes the former, the latter must be sought for in sources exceedingly various, and extracted from them by a

long and laborious process. Undoubtedly that is useless in education, which does not enable a man to glorify God better in his way through life; but then we are called upon to glorify him in many various ways, according to our several callings and circumstances; and as we are to glorify him both in our bodies and in our spirits, with all our faculties, both outward and inward, I cannot consider it unworthy either to render our body strong and active, or our understanding clear, rich, and versatile in its powers: I cannot reject from the range of religious education whatever ministers to the perfection of our bodies and our minds, so long as both in body and mind, in soul and spirit, we ourselves may be taught to minister to the service of God.

This being the case, it seems to me that the advantages of great places of education are very considerable, and the benefits of such foundations as ours, of which this day has naturally reminded me, impose a great responsibility on all of us. I said the advantages of *great* places of education; and I meant to lay a stress upon the epithet. It seems to me that there is, or ought to be, something very ennobling in being connected with any establishment at once ancient and magnificent; where all about us, and all the associations belonging to the objects around us, should be great, splendid, and elevating. What an individual ought, and often

does, derive, from the feeling that he is born of an old and illustrious race, from being familiar, from his childhood, with the walls and with the trees that speak of the past no less than of the present, and make both full of images of greatness; this, in an inferior degree, belongs to every member of an ancient and celebrated place of education. In this respect, every one has a responsibility imposed upon him, which I wish that we more considered. We know how school traditions are handed down from one school generation to another; and what is it, if in all these there shall be nothing great, nothing distinguished, nothing but a record, to say the best of it, of mere boyish amusements, when it is not a record of boyish follies? Every generation, in which a low and foolish spirit prevails, does its best to pollute the local influences of the place; to degrade its associations, to deprive the thought of belonging to it of any thing that may enkindle and ennoble the minds of those who come after it. And if these foolish, or tame associations, continue, they make the evil worse: persons who appreciate highly the elevating effect of a great and ancient foundation, will no longer send their sons to a place which has forfeited one of its most valuable powers; whose antiquity has nothing of the dignity, nothing of the romance of antiquity, but is either a blank, or worse than a blank. So the spirit gets lower and lower; and instead of find-

ing a help and an encouragement in the associations of its place of education, the ingenuous mind feels them all no more than a weight upon its efforts; they only tend to thwart it, and to keep it down. This is the tendency, not only of a vicious tone, prevailing in a great place of education, but even of a foolish and childish one; of a tone that tolerates ignorance, and an indifference about all, save the amusements of the day. On the other hand, whatever is done here well and honourably, outlives its own generation. In smaller schools, one cannot look forward to posterity; when our children are of an age to commence their education, a total change may have taken place in the spot, and all its associations may have vanished for ever. But here it is not so; the size, the scale, the wealth of a great institution like this ensures its permanency, so far as any thing on earth is permanent. The good and the evil, the nobleness or the vileness, which may exist on this ground now, will live and breathe here in the days of our children; they will form the atmosphere in which they will live hereafter, either wholesome and invigorating, or numbing and deadly. This roof, under which we are now assembled, will hold, it is probable, our children and our children's children: may they be enabled to think, when they shall kneel, perhaps, over the bones of some of us now here assembled, that they are praying where their fathers prayed; and let them not, if they

mock in their day the means of grace here offered, encourage themselves with the thought that the place had long ago been profaned with equal guilt, that they are but infected with the spirit of our ungodliness.

SERMON XVII.

CHRISTIAN PROFESSIONS—OFFERING CHRIST OUR BEST.

MATTHEW, ii. 11.

And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.

THE story from which these words are taken, considered historically, is capable of supplying very little information. Who these wise men were, from what country they came, to what degree their notions regarding Christ were correct, or fully made out to their own minds, and whether any results followed from their journey when they were arrived in their own country again, are questions which it would be vain to try to answer. Because so much has been left untold, much has been added in after times to complete the story; and from the importance which it then assumed, it was fixed upon to stand as the symbol in the

church's celebration of the great mystery of the gospel, the admission of the Gentiles into the church of God. In this respect, historically speaking, the conversion of Cornelius had no doubt been far more properly chosen; because it cannot be said that the wise men, so far as we know, were acquainted with the peculiar truths of the gospel at all: but taken symbolically, in the mere general notion of the wise men of the Gentile world bowing down before the Christ of God, and it may well pass as a representation of that great event, the bringing in of the Gentiles, in which all the churches of the Gentiles have so deep an interest.

In proportion, however, to the obscurity which hangs about it as a fact, is its clearness and usefulness when considered as a symbol. And that, not only as a symbol of the coming in of the Gentiles, the light in which the church regards it, but in another way resembling the instruction conveyed in parables; that is, as giving in the form of a story a general and perpetual lesson. Then, in so applying it, we lose sight at once of all circumstances of time, and place, and individual persons; it is no longer the wise men or magicians from the east, guided by a star to Bethlehem in the land of Judah, and offering gold, and frankincense, and myrrh, to the infant Jesus, in his mother's

arms; but it is the wise in worldly wisdom, from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south, led, not by the star in the heavens, but by the light of God's Spirit in their own hearts; not to Bethlehem, nor to the land of Judah, but to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem; not to the infant Jesus, the Son of David, borne in his mother's arms, but to Jesus the Son of Man, who is sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high, and who having been declared to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead, is known no more after the flesh, as the prophet or king of the earthly Israel; neither does he know any more any such distinctions as Jew or Gentile, but hath given, and gives, access to all alike, by one Spirit unto the Father. And to him, and before his throne in heaven, vain it were to offer the gifts of the eastern magi, gold, frankincense, and myrrh; but as they brought of the best and richest things which God had made to grow or to exist in their by nature unyielding and barren earth, so we also should bring, and should offer, the best and noblest powers which God has implanted in our otherwise dull minds and helpless bodies. So that whatever we have of precious gifts, whether of body or mind,—for the question is here rather of natural gifts than of spiritual graces,—these all

should be offered to the service of Christ, as the only sacrifice of gratitude which it is in our power to render.

There is nothing new in this, most certainly; nothing new in it anywhere; nothing new in it to you. It is a point on which I have often spoken; indeed, it is one most obvious, and can hardly be omitted in any course of Christian exhortation. Yet we need it again and again; we need it, not only put in a general form, that we ought to honour God with all our best, but we should try to consider how to do this in that which is our best; and we should try, too, to get the thought so much a part of our nature, that it will present itself to us whenever the occasion for it occurs; that is, whenever the best of our faculties are in most vigorous exercise; for then it is that it is most apt to be forgotten. We can resolve beforehand, to do all to the glory of God; but when the actual work comes, and interests us deeply for itself, and for its immediate earthly objects, then it is hard; nay, without much habit, impossible, that the spirit of worship and of sacrifice should be at hand, together with the spirit of energy; and that we should, distinctly and consciously, hallow all our active thoughts and doings by devoting them to the service of Christ. It is hard, and without habit, impossible; and yet, without it, who can be saved? For if the most

lively portion of our life be not sanctified; if our best be offered to idols, and only our vacant hours and thoughts, or some little portion of them, be offered to God, what is it but to offer to him the lame, and the blind, and the worthless, in the spirit of a slave, who gives no more than what he is afraid to refuse?

Our best divides itself naturally into two classes: the best service of our bodies, and the best service of our minds. Now, in one sense, to talk of the service of our bodies would be out of place here: in the common course of things, it is not likely that many of us will be called to a state of life in which we must maintain ourselves by bodily labour. It is probable that, with most of us, our work, of what kind soever, will rather employ our minds. Yet, without reckoning on any of the stranger accidents of life, which, either from public or private changes, may alter our lot in these points,—and certainly there have been many instances of such reverses in different times and countries,—still, in the common course of things, there are professions which, in ordinary language, are called the active, as distinguished from the learned; professions to which many of you are being called continually, and to which some, perhaps, from a very early age, are looking forward. And it very often happens, that persons make choice of these professions for the very reason that

they like an active life better than a studious one; that they wish to exercise, I do not say, their bodily faculties only, for this can hardly be the wish of any one; but their bodily faculties, together with those of their minds, rather than those of their minds either wholly or principally. I know not that such choice is to be blamed; it may be quite right, quite agreeable to God's will concerning us; but certainly, whoever makes such a choice, has need to consider, that although God gives us great liberty in determining how, or with what faculties, we will principally serve him, yet he never relaxes his claim to be served by us in some manner; he never allows us to make such a choice as should withdraw us from his service altogether, or should justify us in thinking that we are less bound to him than others of our brethren, or in any real sense are placed at a greater distance from him than they.

This is not altogether unnecessary to be stated; for it is to be feared, that we connect very unjustly a very different sense of our responsibility to God with the thought of different professions. If a person is going into the ministry of the church, that, of course, is acknowledged by all to be the service of God; there we know that we are bound to offer him our best. But take other professions, the law, for instance, or medicine, or any other civil calling; it is not so certain that this truth is

equally acknowledged. And if we go to the active professions, the army or the navy, would it not sound even strange to the ears of many persons, to be told that these were the appointed callings in which they were, in St. Paul's language, to abide with God? Yet is it not most certain, that if there be any calling in which we cannot think even of ourselves as serving God, that calling must be a sinful one? For surely the business of our lives must be devoted to God; it cannot be enough to give him only that portion of our time which our regular employment leaves at liberty. I hold it, therefore, to be most certain, that if any one is unable to fancy himself serving God as a soldier, or as a sailor, to him those callings are sinful; it is at the forfeit of his salvation that he enters them. But let him consider whether this be the fault of these callings, in themselves, or his own; and if he sees no reason to doubt that the callings are good and lawful, that they involve great duties, and a very great field for individual improvement, then let him look upon them, on whichever of them he makes his choice, as his appointed line of serving God: let him think how greatly he may glorify him in both, by doing and by suffering; that if it be painful to be called upon to contribute, in some instances, unavoidably to human suffering, yet, that in the very midst of such scenes, there are often the most delightful oppor-

tunities of lessening it; of exercising, in the very highest degree, the virtues of self-denial, of patient fortitude, of heroic daring in the cause of charity. Surely the annals of war, amidst all their horrors, present to us some pictures of such heroic goodness, as it is scarcely possible, in ordinary life, to attain to; and without noticing any others, who has ever read the well-known story of the loss of the Kent, and the preservation of her crew, without feeling, that never was Christ more glorified than by the fruits of his grace shown amidst such a trial; that never were the faith and charity of martyrs or missionaries shown forth more beautifully than in the Christian soldiers and sailors so nobly united amid the horrors of that scene in the service of their heavenly Master.

But if these professions be entered upon in the spirit with which, it is to be feared, some do enter on them; if they are looked to as a shelter for idleness and carelessness, as a field where an unchristian life and temper may pass with a less portion of worldly blame than elsewhere; as an opportunity for indulging a mere animal love of enterprise, or a selfish and sinful desire for worldly honour; then, indeed, evil is the beginning, more evil will be the progress, and most infinitely evil will be the end of such a choice so made. If strength and courage are not to be sanctified to God's service, then, amidst the scenes where they

are called into exercise, the danger is great indeed, of their being devoted to another master. I speak not of such atrocious cruelties as the laws and habits of our times condemn; though even these have been perpetrated in our days, and may be again; but I speak of the jealous pride of honour, the licentiousness in sensual pleasures, the general carelessness and searing of heart and conscience which are displayed in unprincipled soldiers and sailors. Then the familiarity with danger and death is no longer heroism, but brutishness: it is but one more check to evil taken away from us. Then, as passion or prejudice may lead, how fearful is the amount of guilt often incurred, and of suffering to others unscrupulously occasioned! Most true is it that here, as in other things, great opportunities of grace, and great temptations to sin, lie close beside each other; and in proportion to the high crown of glory to be won in these callings by Christ's true servants, is the portion of deep guilt and condemnation reserved for those who enter upon them without one single feeling of offering up in them their daily sacrifice.

If then there be any here who are thinking of becoming soldiers or sailors, let me conjure them to examine well their own hearts, and to remember whose pledged soldiers they are already. If true to that service, and judging soberly of their own particular faculties, they think that

Christ's call, as signified by the nature of his gifts to them, invites them to serve him in an active life, where the bolder and harder virtues will be most exercised, let them not fear to obey the call; but rather let them bear earnestly in mind that he is calling them, and let them never cease to follow him. But if it be idleness, impatience of restraint or work here, a foolish vanity, or a sinful carelessness that prompts them; if they dread the yoke of Christ, and think that as soldiers or sailors they will be less required to take it upon them, then let them be assured that God's curse is on their heart's desire so cherished; that their thought is not of faith, but of unbelief and wickedness; that they are devoting themselves without a struggle to the service of sin and of death. It is vain for them, and is no more than self-deceit, to ask advice of their friends in such a matter: their friends cannot see into their hearts, nor judge from what motives their desire of any particular profession may arise. But you can judge for yourselves; and you are to judge at your own peril. Be assured, that whatever your outward dress may be, you received alike in your baptism the marks of the Lord Jesus; and these no after difference of worldly calling may efface or alter. Christ's soldiers you are and must be, whether, as far as concerns your ministry amongst your brethren, you are called upon to minister at home or abroad,

in peace or in war, in the battle field or in the house of God. In all these different callings, he, in his goodness, allows us to glorify him, and to benefit our brethren; in all we may offer to him, our gold, our frankincense, and our myrrh; whatever accomplishments of body or mind, whatever faculties, whatever affections, he has given us most abundantly. And in all, and surely not least in that which seems freest from temptation, we may withhold our sacrifice: in all we may live, as too often we do live, not to him, but to ourselves; and then living to ourselves, we shall die unto ourselves also, and shall arise to be again with ourselves and for ourselves; that is, lost to God and to his light and life, in that state where there is neither the will nor the power to offer any sacrifice, but that eternal one, salted with fire, the sacrifice of the sinner to God's justice.

SERMON XVIII.

OUR HOPE TOWARDS GOD.

1 Peter, iii. 15.

Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.

It may possibly have been remarked by some who have attended the service in this chapel for a considerable time, that I have scarcely ever touched in this place upon what are commonly called the evidences of Christianity. I have not attempted to give the proofs either of what is called natural religion, or of the divine origin of the Christian religion in particular. I have generally taken these things for granted, and have endeavoured rather to enforce the conclusions which flow from them, if they are taken as premises, than to establish them as conclusions themselves from other premises. And surely it must be a strange sort of

Christianity which should be constantly busied in making good its title; we are little likely to bring forth the fruits of Christian faith, if that faith itself is as yet unsettled. It has always seemed to me, that the proper course of Christian education is to begin with taking the gospel for granted; to endeavour, if possible, to make the affections and conduct Christian, without forestalling the order of nature, and presenting to the understanding that food for which it has, as yet, no desire. Now if in this attempt we fail, either through our own fault, or that of the persons instructed, or through the fault of both together; if a person grows up without Christian affections, and not leading a Christian life, I am not one of those who think that a display of the evidences of Christianity will give him either the one or the other. It is the moral part of his nature that we should rather attempt to touch, than to convince his understanding. But if he be touched morally, either by direct persuasion, or, as is far more likely, by God's grace in some happy moment, making him listen to the call of the circumstances of life; if he be disposed to seek truth, and from the nature of truth does not conceive it possible that goodness can be separated, then the evidences may be presented to him with advantage. Or again, for that happier number who have believed and loved from their childhood, through God's blessing upon their

parents' care and example; those whose notions of good and evil are the notions of a Christian, not of a servant of the world; for them, when their minds are opening under such heavenly auspices, when the desire of truth begins to arise within them, distinct as an idea, yet actually inseparable from the love of goodness; when their Christian reason craves to be satisfied, that so all their nature may go on in God's service with equal steps, each part keeping its due proportion; then the sure foundation on which their faith was built may be laid open to them, and they may see that it is indeed the eternal rock of the truth of God.

I am well aware that many, even of the younger part of our congregation, have arrived at this state long ere now; that their minds have begun long since to question with things, and to long for their answer. And so I have endeavoured, from time to time, to introduce into what I have said, both from this place and elsewhere, occasional notices of some of the difficulties which are found, or supposed to be found, in the Scriptures, and of some of the reasons on which our faith is founded. But perhaps, at this particular period of the year, when so many of our number are so soon going to leave us, and to enter upon the business of life, it may not be useless if I endeavour to bring together, within a short compass, some of the principal points of Christian evidence, not attempting to

exhaust the subject—for how is that possible?—but selecting some of those views which may seem best to answer the object described in the text,—"the giving a reason, both to ourselves and others, of the hope that is in us."

Now "the hope that is in us," I suppose, may be thus described:—"We hope that after our death we shall live again, to die no more; and live, not such a life as we now do, chequered, at the best, with sorrow, and pain, and evil, but a life of happiness and goodness, in which we shall know God truly and love him heartily." In this hope there are two things, that we shall live again, for ever, in happiness; and that we shall pass this happy and everlasting life in the full knowledge and love of God. And in order to give a satisfactory reason for this hope, we must have reason to believe that God is, and that he has promised this happy eternity to us: for the two things may be conceived distinct; we may believe that God is, and yet have no reason to think that he has promised us eternal life; or we might possibly believe that we should live for ever, and yet neither think that that life was the gift of God, or that there existed any God at all. I do not mean that the last is a common belief, perhaps none may ever have entertained it; but I mean, that we can conceive it to be possible; and then the hope of such an eternity would not be a Christian's hope, nor

would it have the same effect on the nature of him who were to entertain it.

The Christian's hope, then, embraces two points, a belief in the being of God, and that he is an object worthy of the knowledge and love of his creatures; and secondly, a belief that God has given unto us eternal life. The first of these is what we call natural religion, the second is Christianity. Now, although it is true that by far the greatest part of what we may hear and read against our Christian hope is avowedly directed against the peculiarly Christian part of it; yet, in reality, I believe that the part belonging to natural religion is as much disbelieved as the other, and the objections raised against it are of a kind far more perplexing. I am persuaded that there is no part of the Christian scheme which may not be easily and triumphantly maintained, if we first assume the truth of natural religion. In fact, it does not seem too much to say, that so far from embarrassing a question which before was simple, Christianity, as might be expected from a revelation, does nothing but remove or lessen the difficulties which existed beforehand; and that the only difficulties in itself are such as, belonging properly to natural religion, have been adopted by it, and on which it has not thought proper to give us full information. I need only instance the two great questions of the origin of evil, and the consistency

of God's foreknowledge with the freedom of the human will.

The allusion to these two points leads me naturally to show with what degree of assurance we must remain satisfied in the great inquiry supposed to be before us. We shall be mistaken if we expect to arrive at such absolute certainty as should make doubt equivalent to insanity. On any view of the question, something, nay much, must be left for faith; and this faith must be the faith of good or of evil. For as he who believes that God is, may be met with difficulties which he cannot answer; as, for instance, that of the origin of evil; so, and much more, he who believes the contrary may be met with difficulties to which he can find no reasonable answer; there is no holding his conclusion any more than ours without believing something more than we can explain. But here the moral consideration comes in, and that argument from the universal meaning of words, which seems to me one of the greatest witnesses to himself which God has left us. For it is manifest, that to a good man, if it were truth that there was no God, truth would be the most hateful thing in the world, and falsehood the best. Truth and goodness, inseparably joined under God's sovereignty, would, on a system of atheism, be severed for ever: good men would then labour, and they would do well so to labour, to believe a lie. And

if it be said that we use the term "good" arbitrarily, affixing it to an idea which, in itself, has no more real goodness than its opposite, then I answer that the fact is not so; that here is God's witness of himself through that gift of language which he has given to us; that the ideas attached to the words "good" and "evil" are so fixed by long and universal usage that they cannot be altered; and that he who were to choose to convert them, and to mean by the word "good" what we call "evil," and by "evil" what we call "good," would find, in the impossibility of making men adopt his sense of the words, a sure warning that the sense so universally attached to them is one which came from God in the beginning, and which God will in the end confirm.

It will be seen that I am purposely passing over those direct arguments which are familiar to us all, in proof of the existence of God. It is neither possible nor necessary to go into the arguments in favour of the existence of an intelligent Creator, with which all creation abounds. These are arguments to which no answer can be made; only it is attempted to prevent our minds from being fully influenced by them, by advancing difficulties of another sort, such as the origin of evil, already noticed, or the supposed eternity of matter. It is my wish to show, that allowing every weight to these objections; allowing that we cannot fully

answer either of them, as it is certain that we cannot fully answer the first; yet still, as there must be faith in either case, by which I mean a belief, in spite of some objections which we cannot answer, that then a good man will hold to that conclusion which keeps truth and goodness united, rather than to that which must overwhelm him with a difficulty absolutely maddening, by tearing their eternal bond asunder.

And it should be further observed, that although there may be difficulties in the question, speaking intellectually, which we may be unable to answer; yet that practically the belief of the existence of God is full of nothing but the most entire consistency and likelihood. Take it as a truth, and work from it, and the result will convince us every day more and more that we assumed its truth justly. For it is manifest, that in proportion as we do work from it, the result of happiness to ourselves and others will be increased; and that if all men did work from it, the state of the world would be so manifestly like heaven, that to doubt of God would then really amount to insanity. Whereas, if we conceive it possible that men could work out the principles of ungodliness to their full extent; that is, resolving good and evil into a mere matter of taste, and expressly denying the reasonableness of self-reproach for any thing that we may have done; and it is quite manifest that the state of the world

would be so like hell, that it would be no less insane to doubt the source of the principles from which this result also had been effected.

Thus then we may, I think, render a sufficient reason for the hope that is in us, that this world is not left without God. We hope it reasonably, because we see a great many unanswerable arguments, leading directly to this conclusion; because if, moved by certain theoretical difficulties, we were to adopt the opposite belief, there would arise the greatest possible contradiction which it is possible to conceive, namely, that truth is an evil, and falsehood a good; because, by acting as if there were a God, the result is virtue and happiness, and by acting as if there were none, the result is vice and misery. This is such a reason for the hope that is in us as shall save us abundantly from the charge of hoping in foolishness. But if it should so happen that what is in us with respect to the existence of God is not hope, but indifference, at the least, if not fear; if we should not care to be told that there was no God, or if it would actually be a relief from a burden, what is to be said then?—Say that what we have in us is a fearful looking for of judgment; that we shrink from death, not only as the end of all our happiness here, but possibly as the beginning of a life of eternal misery. Shall we be able long to give, either to ourselves or others, a reason of the *fear*

that is in us? I am afraid we shall not: faith we shall have indeed still; but it will be Satan's faith, not God's: we shall never be able to answer the arguments in favour of God's existence, but still we shall resolve not to believe it; for it is misery not to be endured to think that we are accursed for ever. And are we, then, more reasonable than the believer in God? Nay, much less so; for, intellectually speaking, our belief is formed in defiance of much greater difficulties; and, morally speaking, we make the whole of life a chaos or a hell. We shall have submitted our understandings more, but it will have been to Satan, not to God; and our hearts will have found the while neither peace nor happiness.

I have purposely chosen rather to understate than overstate the force of the argument; for, if it be at all overstated, the distrust of the mind, when it discovers the error, is apt to lead to a dangerous recoil; while, by understating it, we have the pleasure of a conscious reserve of strength, of obliging the enemy to show all his force, and meeting it undismayed; while the extent of our own unemployed resources have never been explored. Take the case as I have stated it, without attempting to display the force of the arguments for the being of God, or to lessen the difficulties which are brought against it; still to us, not intellectual beings only, but reasonable and spiritual, with a

moral nature as well as an intellectual, to believe in God is the height of reason, to disbelieve him the extremity of wickedness or madness. This is, or should be, enough; it will be enough if we remember the tenure of our condition here, that we live by faith, not by sight; and that we cannot expect to be so sure of God's existence whilst here, as to have no greater force of conviction to look for when we shall see him as he is.

SERMON XIX.

OUR HOPE TOWARDS GOD IN CHRIST.

Acts, ii. 32.

This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.

The continuation of the subject which I began last Sunday, falls in most happily with this day, which is the festival of the great Apostle, St. Peter. From his epistle were taken the words which I chose for the text of this whole inquiry; the words in which he urges us to be ready to give a reason of the hope that is in us. On him, in a more especial manner, the first planting of the church of Christ rested; and by his preaching at Jerusalem, the knowledge of salvation by Christ was first declared. No man also could ever have exemplified more fully than St. Peter, the onward course of a Christian from less faith to more; none was better fitted than he to have compassion on the ignorant, and on the weak in faith, when he

remembered from what imperfect and unworthy notions, from what an over-confident, and therefore failing spirit, his mind and heart had grown up under the teaching of the Holy Ghost to understand, and believe, and love, and obey, all the counsel of God. And though he, like the humblest believer, is now veiled from our knowledge; for in the unseen world, we have to do with Jesus only, the first-fruits of the dead; with all others our intercourse is delayed, till Christ's coming again; yet we cannot better celebrate his memory than by endeavouring to establish that faith, of which he was the earliest preacher, by striving to raise ourselves from that weak faith in which he once lived, to that full faith, and therefore full holiness, which marked the latter years of his life, after he had received the teaching of Christ's Spirit.

In pursuance, then, of the plan which I began last Sunday, I am now to lay before you some of the reasons for our hope as Christians; that supposing us to be fully convinced that God is, and that he is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him, we may justify our farther and more particular hope, that God has given to us eternal life, and that this life is in his Son.

I prefer this manner of stating the question at the outset, rather than to say, that I wish to state "the principal evidences of Christianity." Not

only does it accord better with St. Peter's direction, "to give a reason of the *hope* that is in us," but it makes the subject far more simple and practical, and keeps before our minds the only way in which the question of the evidences, as they are called, may be profitably examined. Supposing us to have heard of the good tidings of salvation, that God has given to us eternal life in his Son Jesus Christ; that the tidings seem to us of infinite value, telling us what we should, above all things, wish to be true; but that we would fain be satisfied, not only of the delightfulness of such a promise, but of its reality; then, as the question is simple and natural, so the answer given to it may be abundantly plain and satisfactory.

Our parents told us in our earliest years, that we should rise again after death to a life of eternal happiness. And when we are old enough to read for ourselves that book, on whose authority they told it us, we there find it said, even as our parents reported, that God has given to us eternal life. Some may say, that they do not need that book's witness; that they hope for eternal life, not because of its saying, but because nature, or God in nature, speaks to them in a voice not to be mistaken, that there is something in them which will not die. No doubt, what nature does say to us is worthy of our earnest attention, for God speaks to us through her means. But he must be a bold

man, and of a sanguine faith, who thinks that nature does really speak so clearly on this point as to require no confirmation of her witness. What arguments she draws from our own condition, in part encourage our hope, in part forbid it; we have faculties which might seem to reach beyond this world; yet, on the other hand, we see these faculties decay before we leave this world; so that their perfection appears to be designed for this present state of being, or else they would rather go on improving till death interrupted their advance. But what arguments nature, if indeed it be nature, draws from the love and unchangeableness of God, these are far more satisfactory. Would a father, at any time of his being, consent to destroy a son whom he loved, and who loved him in return? On the contrary, nature seems, as it were, so to compassionate his feelings of sorrow, if he were obliged to witness the destruction of the child to whom he had given birth, that in the common course of things, the tie remains unbroken, so long as he himself exists; he has no consciousness of his child in any other state than as living, and loving him, and being loved by him. And if our Father in heaven loves us, and has enabled us to love him, will he destroy this bond which even our earthly fathers prize so dearly? or will he not, as he is eternal and almighty, be for

ever the living Father of his living children, that because he lives, we may live also?

I might well doubt, however, whether nature would teach us this; for such notions of God seem peculiarly to flow from a revealed knowledge of him; and these seem to have been the considerations which urged good men, in some instances, under the Jewish dispensation, to hope, with whatever degree of assurance, for a life to come. But now many men borrow knowledge from revelation, without being aware of it; and it is possible, I do not say that it is probable, perhaps it may never have occurred, but it is certainly possible for a man to persuade himself that he has, on these grounds, a sufficient hope of eternal life, and that he need not apply for it to the gospel. Now we must not dispute his general reasoning, for it is sound; and Christ himself, and the whole scheme of Christianity, assumes it to be so. But the error of such a man as I am now imagining, consists in applying this general reasoning to his own case; in supposing that he himself is a child of God, loved by him, and loving him. This relation has been destroyed by sin, which has hindered love mutually; as a matter of experience, it has hindered us from loving God; as a matter of reason and revelation, it hinders God from loving us. And, therefore, the hope of eternal life, founded on our relation to

God as children, reasonable and true as a matter of principle, becomes to us inapplicable without Christianity. It is the very object of the Christian scheme to enable us to apply this hope to ourselves; to tell us that we are reconciled to God, that we, through the Son of God, are made sons of God likewise, that God loves us, and that if we love him as our Father in return, we shall be his children for ever.

Thus, then, the hope of a Christian is a most reasonable hope in itself, inasmuch as it grows out of our knowledge of what fatherly love is, even amongst ourselves; and as God's love exceeds ours no less than his power exceeds our power, so a Father, almighty, and all-gracious, will not, we are sure, destroy his children, or suffer them to be destroyed. And whereas it is a matter of fact perfectly notorious, that, in the common course of things, this relation between God and man has become disordered, and that we do not feel towards him as loving children feel to a loving father, so it is manifest that something was wanted to restore this feeling in us, and to put us into such a situation, that we might safely apply to ourselves the hope derived from a source on God's part no less sure than the sureness of his two essential attributes, power and love.

Reason then tells us that the children of an eternal and all-gracious Father will keep their re-

lationship to him for ever. Experience tells us that we do not stand naturally in this relation to God, because there is wanting in us its necessary sign, love to our Father, and a confidence in his love towards us. Revelation tells us that God has restored us to this relation, by giving so infinite a proof of his love towards us, as invites, nay, constrains us, if duly believed, to feel a full, confiding, grateful, in a word, childlike love, of him in return. And the proof appealed to by revelation is this; that God gave his own Son to die for us. Doubtless the proof is so great, that none can be greater. If God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, shall he not, with him, freely give us all things? Undoubtedly we are become the children of God, and heirs of all the hopes of God's children, if this be so. And if we have sufficient grounds to be satisfied of the fact, no sound mind can doubt the conclusion.

What grounds have we, then, for being satisfied of this great fact, that God has given his own Son to die for us? We have these grounds: that about eighteen hundred years ago there lived in Judæa, —in the only country, that is, in the world, where God was then truly known,—a man who called himself the Son of God, and called upon all men to believe in him as the only way of coming to God. Now one calling himself the Son of God, yet being in form, and in the common habits of

life, a man like the rest of us, needed certainly some witness to the truth of his words. And the witness to show that God is in man, the seal that declares the hand of God, is threefold; it must be made up of power, and wisdom, and goodness. Jesus of Nazareth had this seal; and of two parts of it we can ourselves be the judges: for his words which show his wisdom and his goodness are before us; to read them is the same thing as to hear them; time in no respect alters their nature or their force. The third part of the seal of God is power: and here certainly time does make some difference; we cannot see the divine power of Jesus as we can see his divine wisdom and goodness; we must receive this on the witness of others. But it is witnessed to us by those who did see it; it is witnessed to us, that He whom we ourselves know to have been divine in wisdom and goodness, was no less divine in power; that He hushed the winds, cured diseases by a word, created food in the same manner to feed five thousand people, and even raised up the dead. Yet, as He declared himself to be the Son of God, and came to assure us that we might become the sons of God through him, one thing more seemed required, that the power of God should be with him to the end; that death, that last enemy, before whom human power, and wisdom, and goodness, alike bow down to the dust together, should in him be swallowed up in

victory. Therefore it is witnessed to us, that he not only raised up others who, a few years afterwards, died again, but that he raised up himself also to triumph over death for ever. His power lived through death, and overcame it; he died because he was, like us, the Son of Man; he rose again, and ascended into heaven, because he was the Son of God.

This is witnessed to us, to speak of these only, by his beloved disciple, St. John, and the chief among his disciples, St. Peter; we have their witness in our hands, the witness of those who saw his power, even as we ourselves see his wisdom and his goodness. For I must again remind you, that these three parts of God's perfect seal are not to be separated; neither of them without the others being that seal. And this should particularly be remembered when we are considering the question of miracles. It is not every wonderful thing, contrary to the laws of nature so far as we already know them, that becomes immediately a sign of divine power. If we look through the records of past times we shall find many extraordinary facts not to be accounted for, nor yet therefore to be disbelieved, but still which are simply extraordinary; wonders, not miracles; things to excite surprise, but which lead to nothing. And in our own times the phenomena of animal magnetism have lately received an attestation which, in my judg-

ment, establishes the facts beyond question, while certainly, as far as mere strangeness is concerned, and departure from the known laws of nature, they are, perhaps, more extraordinary than some things which we might call miracles. I mention this, because I am inclined to think that there exists a lurking fear of these phenomena, as if they might shake our faith in true miracles; and therefore men are inclined to disbelieve them in spite of testimony; a habit far more unreasonable and far more dangerous to our Christian faith than any belief in the facts of magnetism. For these facts are mere wonders in our present state of knowledge; at a future period, perhaps, they may become the principles of a new science; but they neither are, nor will be, miracles; they contain no certain sign of the hand of God. Again, there is a chapter in Pliny's Natural History recording instances of several persons who had revived after death. Now, admitting for an instant, what there is no reason to admit, that the fact in some one or more of these instances was true, yet here again would be a wonder merely, and not a miracle. For nothing else is known of the persons said to have so revived: they professed to bear no message from God; they wanted the two more essential proofs, if possible, of God's hand, his wisdom and his goodness. But the wonders which Christ wrought, and above all, the wonder of his resurrection, are mira-

cles, because he wrought them; because they were wrought by one who declared himself to be the Son of God, and whose life and words bore the seal of the wisdom of God and the goodness of God. In such a case, the seal of power in addition becomes the seal of the power of God; extraordinary things wrought by such a person are more than wonders, they are miracles; they are taken out of the class of things merely strange and unaccountable; they become, if I may so speak, natural and intelligible, bearing no longer the mark of fantastic chance, but of intelligent power; miraculous to us, because of our infirmity, but natural to God, because they are divine power in union with divine wisdom and divine goodness.

Thus considered, in connexion with his life and teaching, the mighty works of Christ become at once miraculous and natural: miraculous, as far as regards their being an effectual seal of God's power; yet so natural, in the sense of probable, as to require no extraordinary weight of testimony to establish them. And yet the testimony which we have is extraordinary; that is, it surpasses in value almost every testimony by which any of the facts of history are established. I am not assuming the inspiration of the Gospels or Epistles; it merely injures the argument to do so: I merely take the Gospels as histories, the Epistles as simple letters; and yet, considering them in this light only, it is

the height of ignorance to doubt their testimony. It is the height of ignorance, because it shows a total want of acquaintance with the question of historical evidence, with the marks of genuineness and authenticity in any writing, with the immense improbability, I had almost said impossibility, that the main facts of any historical statement should be otherwise than true. I am not speaking of mythical narratives, which the writer never meant to be taken as history; but of writings intended to be historical, and still more, of writings relating to the very times of the writer, how many are to be found substantially false? Exaggeration exists in abundance; unfair colouring of facts and characters; unfair suppressions; but yet, after all, little or nothing of pure invention. Now, in the Christian histories, even if a man is so ignorant of internal evidence as not to apprehend those marks which place them in the very highest class of testimony, even if he chooses to rank them with the most credulous writers or the most partial, to suspect what he will of exaggeration and unfair colouring and suppression, still there must remain a mass of facts which, according to all our experience of history, we cannot disbelieve; and this mass, however diminished from what it is actually and truly, would yet be fully enough to warrant our Christian hope that Jesus Christ is the Son of

God; and that therefore we may believe his word when he tells us that through him we, too, may be made the sons of God, as he is, and shall live for ever, like him, and with him.

And here I pause, with a thousand arguments untouched, and necessarily so: but having given, I think, a sufficient reason for that hope which, I trust, exists in us all. If it does not exist, then there can be no interest in being able to give a reason for it; nor by learning the reason, should we therefore only gain the hope. Other means, not of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, must give us the hope of the sons of God. He gives it, from whom are all good things, without whose drawing none ever came to Christ, and none can come. But He gives it to those who ask it, for so He has promised; and he who spared not His own Son, but delivered him up for us all, will, with him, give us his Spirit also; even the spirit of faith, and the spirit of hope, and the spirit of love; in one word, that spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. He gives it to those who ask it, to those who seek for it, to those who, with earnestness of entreaty and desire, strive to win it. But He gives it not to the careless, not to those who ask as if they did not care to have. Ask we therefore for it, and ask also for the desire to ask heartily; let us cultivate the spirit of prayer,

bending the knees, and saying the words, till God gives us the true and earnest desire; till the duty becomes the privilege and the pleasure, and the wish to have the hope of the sons of God is changed into the very hope itself, most reasonable and most lively.

SERMON XX.

WHO ARE PARTAKERS IN OUR HOPE.

1 Cor. i. 13.

Is Christ divided?

In my two last Sermons I have attempted to show, first, the grounds for our hope in God's existence and goodness generally; and next, the grounds for our hope in him as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; that we are become, through Christ, restored to the state of children of God, and if children of an eternal Father, then heirs of his eternal blessing. And here it might be thought we might stop; for what more can we need than an assured hope of eternal life? than a restoration of our privileges as God's children? than a knowledge of God revealed at once to our minds and affections in the person of Jesus Christ? In other words, if we can give a reason for our Christian

hope, what further need have we of evidence, so far as religion is concerned? or how can religious truth, as it is called, with the exception of the one great truth of salvation through Christ, deserve to be distinguished from truth of all other kinds, which, indeed, is earnestly to be coveted as one of the best of God's gifts, but yet than which, so far as our salvation is concerned, there is still a way more excellent?

The question, then, to be considered, and for all those who are entering into life it is a grave one, is that of the text, "Is Christ divided?" It is the question of the text, considered apart from the context; the literal meaning of the words, dropping, for a moment, the sense in which the Apostle used them. It is a question of fact, whether, indeed, Christ be so divided, as that some who call themselves by his name are not really his; and if so, then it is a question practically still more important, By what signs may we judge of any man, or set of men, belonging to this number; and if we may conclude that any do belong to it, then how should we feel and act towards them?

There is yet another question arising out of the same words; "Is Christ divided" by any differences amongst his people, such as do not make either part cease to be really his? And if he be not divided, is it not a fatal mistake to suppose

that he is? to confound difference with division, and to break up the unity of the spirit for the sake of a variety in the form?

So, then, the words, "Is Christ divided?" lead properly to these two great duties of all Christ's servants, not to reckon those as belonging to them who are not their Master's; nor, again, to count those as separated from them, whom their Master does not cease to acknowledge as his people.

First, then, is Christ so divided as that some who call themselves by his name are not really his? Undoubtedly we must fear that this is so; for Christ himself compares his church to a net which was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind; and that of those so gathered, some, when the net was drawn to the shore, were thrown away. And Paul speaks of some who had a form of godliness or of Christianity, but denied the power of it. From the very earliest, and what are called the purest, times of Christianity, down to this present hour, Christ has been always so divided, as that some of those who are called by his name will be disowned by him at the last judgment.

But, secondly, what are the signs by which we may in a manner anticipate Christ's judgment, and pronounce that any do not belong to him? Here, too, the Scripture is very express; for St. Paul says, "Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards,

nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." And in another place he says the same of those who are guilty of "hatred, variance, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, emulations, revellings, and such like." It is clear, therefore, that all persons living in any such sins, unrepented of, will be disowned by Christ at his coming; that therefore they are not truly his; and that therefore, as they do call themselves by his name, Christ is divided, inasmuch as there are amongst his nominal people the servants really of another master.

Now this is a great breach of Christian union, a tearing it indeed asunder. And such a view of the division in Christ's body which is made by evil men, and of that unity which Christ established amongst all his true members, that they should join in loving God, and Christ, and all goodness, and in loving one another, because Christ loved them all, and they all had such sympathy with each other in loving Christ in return, is a most wholesome guide for us in our way through life; teaching us whom to cling to and whom to shun; with whom our sympathies should be cultivated, and with whom any sympathy, which may exist in smaller matters of taste or opinion, should be as carefully watched and restrained. This is the true communion of saints, far more effectual than the love of abstract good; it sanctifies the strongest,

and, at the same time, some of the most dangerous feelings of our nature, those of party zeal: it creates the only good, and wise, and holy party which exists upon earth, the party of all good men under Christ their head; and for this party, and for its interests, it calls for all the zeal, and affection, and intense self-devotion which, exerted in the cause of any party of man's making, are for ever falling into sin, and are, in their very nature, idolatrous.

But now, bearing in our minds and hearts an entire devotion to Christ's true party, to the communion of the saints, may we not still walk through life with too fierce and harsh a spirit, if we are ready to exclude from our communion all who are sinners; if we make no allowance for evil in others, compassed as we are ourselves with so many infirmities? Here seems to be one great use of that bond which unites all Christ's nominal servants, however little some of them may really deserve the name. He whom they call their Master and their Saviour, is as yet willing and ready to be so; it is as yet true that he has died for them; they are within his covenant; he still calls to them, with much long-suffering, if by any means they may obey the call. And if he bears with their evil, how much more may and ought we to bear with it. Are they living in sin, careless of their privileges, doing dishonour to the holy name which they bear?

Yet still they do bear that name; and if Christ died for us all, while we were yet sinners, aliens to God and strangers to the covenant of promise, how much more should we regard those who have been bought with the same precious blood as we ourselves; and though they have ill understood or profited by the mercy shown them, have never yet wilfully renounced their claim to it! We must strive to practise towards them the true love of Christ; by all means to labour to bring them back from their evil; and therefore, if it were for this reason only, not to encourage them in evil; actually to hold back from them our sympathy, our confidence, and our esteem; but to be ready and eager to give them all whenever they follow Christ heartily; and in the meanwhile, by all offices of meekness and kindness, to win them, for love's sake, so to follow him.

This then means, if applied to a young man practically, on his entrance into life, that, as pledged to be Christ's follower, his sympathies and friendships must be with those, and with those only, who are truly Christ's followers also; that his standard of unity should be a holy life; his standard of division a wicked one; that he should bear this feeling ever uppermost, amid the various earthly and evil divisions which he will find around him, striving in two ways to confound the true; both by making him indifferent to sin, when it is

found in those of his own earthly party, and cold towards goodness when found in those of the opposite party; that yet, while refusing his sympathy and friendship to the evil, he should remember that an outward and nominal bond at least of Christian communion still unites him with them; and that, therefore, in outward and ordinary intercourse, he ought not to separate himself altogether from them; for his own sake, for their sake, and for Christ's sake, shutting them out of his friendship and confidence; but for his own sake, and their sake, and Christ's sake no less, not shutting them out from his charity or his courtesy. He should, in short, at once bear in mind the real division between him and them, and the visible union; not so pressing on the former as to make him forget the latter, nor so thinking of the latter as to forget the former, but rather availing himself, if possible, of the visible union to bring about an union of heart and spirit also.

But now for the other part of this inquiry, and one in these days of great importance also. We have seen how Christ is divided, divided, wholly and eternally; and that is by sin. Is it true that he is divided except by sin? Do any such differences among his people as make neither party cease to belong to him, really divide him? And if they do not divide him, is it not the very master art of Satan to make us believe that they do, and

so to draw off our attention from that real division which he is seeking continually to encourage, the division between good and evil?

The same great apostle, who has taught us when Christ *is* really divided, has taught us also when he is not. The charter, if I may so speak, of Christian liberty, the bond of Christian charity, the standard of Christian unity, are alike to be found in the fourteenth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans: "Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not: and let not him who eateth not judge him that eateth: for God has received him. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth: yea, he shall be holden up; for God is able to make him stand."

I beg to call your attention particularly to these last words. Many will say that they do not presume to judge of such and such errors, that they leave that to the judgment of God; but yet it is evident that they feel convinced that that judgment will be unfavourable; that they think the error, to use their own language, "highly dangerous." But the apostle does not leave them this cloak for their uncharitableness; and he adds expressly, that the judgment will not be unfavourable, that Christ will not condemn him: "Yea, he shall be holden up, for God is able to make him stand." That God whom he has known and

loved in Christ Jesus, will not condemn him because he has differed with other good men, any more than he will condemn them for differing with him; that in which they differed was but a small thing compared to that in which they agreed: both should be fully persuaded in their own minds; but if their persuasions differ, let each keep his own; and the sin is his only, who turns the difference into division, and dares to exclude from Christ's church those whose love of Christ and holy lives show Christ's true and only seal.

But think not that such Christian charity harms the cause of Christian truth. Christian truth,—as distinguished from that one great point of Christian faith and hope, that we are made the sons of God through the blood of Jesus,—Christian truth is of wide extent, embracing things high and low, outward and inward; involving all the most difficult and profound questions on which the wit of man can possibly be exercised. To know all Christian truth is as morally impossible as to know all truth existing in the universe is physically impossible. Every question of our relations to God and to one another, every question of private and public duty, every question relating to the doctrine or government of the Christian church, is a question of Christian truth; in all such questions there is a right and a wrong; in many of them, particularly those which relate to government, the wrong

in one age or country may be the right in another. In all these, or rather in all of them which concern our practice in our own times, it is the duty and the privilege of those whose understandings have been cultivated, and whose condition in life calls them to work with their minds rather than their bodies, to labour for themselves to find out truth. Certainly they will not in all things find it; even if no lurking prejudice interfere, yet deficient leisure, deficient knowledge, deficient acuteness, or judgment—for where is the intellect that is not in some points deficient?—will assuredly in some one or more points draw or keep the veil before their eyes, and truth will be hidden from them. This is wisely ordered, as a lesson of humility and charity; but yet for their encouragement, in how many points will truth be found; and if found by such honest and earnest search, how deeply will it be valued! For the truth so gained settles itself quietly in our inmost minds, no longer exposed to question, no longer urging us to be violent in defending it, because we feel that we have no sure hold on it, but pure, and clear, and peaceable; a true light, declaring its descent from its heavenly Author. But he will not so gain it if he seeks to reach it by the short road of human authority. Natural it is, I grant, to lean on this staff, whether in worldly matters or in spiritual, whether in philosophy or religion. It

is natural, but it is vain; for such an authority is nowhere to be found; one is our Master, even Christ, and all we are brethren, well fitted to help one another, to instruct one another, to advise one another; but none of us, whether in old times or in modern, whether individuals or churches, whether fathers or councils, fitted to be an authority in matters of truth, fitted to convince the judgment, although they may justly, in all indifferent matters, claim to regulate our outward actions. None of us are fitted to be an authority, yet we are most fitted to be consulted in our several ways, either as evidence or as advisers: and the lover of truth will be as anxious to hear this evidence, to listen to and to weigh the advice or opinion given, as he will be careful not to yield to the authority; that is, to accept any decision on a disputed question merely for the sake of the name of the person giving it.

Having, then, the Christian's hope as an anchor of the soul, sure and stedfast, and knowing that this hope can only be kept alive by prayer and watchfulness; in other words, by a holy life; knowing, also, that in this your hope no evil man is a partaker, and that all are joint partakers in it with you who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity; feeling strongly both by what Christ is divided, and by what he is not divided, go forth into the manifold contests and temptations of our time to ad-

vance your Master's kingdom, and to glorify his name. Seek all truth, so long as you hold by Christ's anchor, humbly, earnestly, fearlessly; be most resolute to win and keep it yourselves, most indulgent to those who mistake it; most firm in protesting against the presumption of those who, having, at the best, gained it by accident, but more often being themselves sunk in error, declare that they alone are possessed of it, and with a yet worse blindness make that pretended truth on which they have chanced to stumble the standard by which to judge of their Master's servants. Be of one party to the death, and that is Christ's; but abhor every other: abhor it, that is, as a thing to which to join yourselves: for every party is mixed up of good and evil, of truth and falsehood; and in joining it, therefore, you join with the one as well as the other. If circumstances should occur which oblige you practically to act with any one party, as the least of two evils, then watch yourselves the more, lest the least of two evils should, by any means, commend itself at last to your minds as a positive good. Join it with a sad and reluctant heart, protesting against its evil, dreading its victory, far more pleased to serve it by suffering than by acting; for it is in Christ's cause only that we can act with heart and soul, as well as patiently and triumphantly suffer. Do this amidst reproach, and suspicion, and cold friendship, and zealous en-

mity; for this is the portion of those who seek to follow their Master, and him only. Do it, though your foes be they of your own household; those whom nature, or habit, or choice, had once bound to you most closely. And then you will understand how, even now, there is a daily cross to be taken up by those who seek not to please men, but God: yet you will learn no less, how that cross, meekly and firmly borne, whether it be the cross of men's ill opinion from without, or of our own evil nature struggled against within, is now, as ever, peace, and wisdom, and sanctification, and redemption, through Him who first bore it.

SERMON XXI.

CHRISTIAN TRIALS.

DANIEL, vi. 10.

Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.

THE story from which these words are taken is so well known to every one, to say nothing of our having just heard it read in this very afternoon's service, that it must be needless to repeat it again. I shall, therefore, only consider the verse so far as it contains a lesson for us now; and I shall venture, as I have done on former occasions, to apply some parts of it in a figurative sense, not, of course, supposing their real meaning to be figurative, but because they afford a more lively, and, therefore, a more impressive manner of briefly expressing moral

truths, than if they were to be stated merely according to their letter.

Daniel knew that the writing was signed which threatened him with death if he did his duty. It is well that we should all know it. There is no wisdom in telling even the youngest amongst us that the path of his duty will be a smooth one. It is a law that altereth not, which declares the contrary; a law more sure than any ordinance of Medes and Persians, for it rests on the unchanging qualities of human nature. As long as men are what they are, so long will they find it hard to be righteous, both from the fault of others, and from their own. We tell this to our children, and yet, with a natural tenderness, we try to make it otherwise. We wish to save them from temptations, to surround them with nothing but kindness and goodness. We shrink, therefore, from the scenes which they will meet with at school, and, in some instances, cannot brace our minds to the hazard of sending them there: or if we do, we long for a system of perpetual watchfulness on the part of the school authorities, of incessant religious instruction, of such care as shall keep from the eyes and ears of those committed to it every sight and every word of evil. But the great question is, and would to God that it were as easy to answer it as to state it! the great question is, By what system in youth can the character be best fitted to do God's work

hereafter in manhood? Is it quite certain that the strength of principle in the man will be in proportion to his ignorance of evil when he was a boy? Or may there not be, and is there not, a danger of the character becoming too soft by over tendering; of its wanting the firmness, the manliness, and the practical wisdom, without which the temptations of after life are hard to be resisted? Is there not also a danger, since our utmost care can but guard that which is outward; the heart will retain its own evil; is there not a danger of provoking that perverse spirit which ever thirsts after things forbidden; which, when the check is removed, will start forth more wildly into evil, because the knowledge of evil had been hitherto so closely kept hidden from it?

Yet whilst we feel that there is a danger on this side, we must not be blind to a still greater danger on the other. Some have ventured even to put mischievous books into the hands of their children, to introduce them to an early acquaintance with scenes of profligacy, in order to save them from the surprise of meeting such things when less carefully watched hereafter. They have hoped to disarm the disease of its worst virulence, by inoculating their children with it, and keeping their own eyes carefully upon them, as they are going through its several stages. But it seems to me, that we are not warranted in making such

experiments; nor can we do it without incurring a fearful responsibility if they fail. I may not go out of my way to show my child evil; still less may I dare to advise him to study it. It may be wise not to forbid many works, which still we should rejoice to see our children abstain from of themselves; and this, because the forbidding them is too apt, in the perversity of our nature, to excite a stronger longing for them. But surely all our direct interference with a young mind should be in favour of good, and to put down evil; all our advice should be, to touch absolutely nothing that was unclean. The great difference between advice and command is this: that the one may irritate, the other cannot; the one may do more mischief by indisposing the general temper of the mind, than it can do good by ensuring obedience in the particular instance; while the good effect of the other tells further than in the immediate thing on which it is exercised. And besides, where obedience is freely rendered, as is the case when we advise only, it both strengthens and ennobles the character; for it is, in fact, a victory gained over temptation: whereas, the obedience paid to a command need not strengthen the character at all; it does not prepare it for that state when the decision how to act must remain with itself. There may be cases, then, in which I should not interpose with authority to restrain a young person

from the knowledge of evil, but none in which I should forbear to advise him not wilfully to seek it; it may be, and I think is, right, to place persons of different characters together, so long as none of them is actually wicked, and exercises a direct influence for evil; but it must be no less right to advise earnestly that each should prefer the society of the best among his companions; that he should be shy of, and keep away from, the worst.

The exact thing to be desired seems to be, to let the trials of the young mind afford a fair specimen of the real trials of life, but yet so to lessen their severity as the greater weakness and inexperience of youth renders no more than fair. You must know, and know practically, that it is an unchanging law of our condition that difficulties and painfulnesses must beset the path of duty. You must not be always watched, nor always in the company of older persons, before whom you feel yourselves under restraint. In plain terms, it is good for you to know to a certain degree what it is to suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. But while you are so far left alone, God forbid that we should stand by the while as neutral, watching with indifference the struggles of the better disposed among you, and doing nothing to aid them in it. That, indeed, were a treason to our common Master, Christ: we could not be our-

selves fighting heartily in his cause if we cared not for the success or defeat of our fellow-soldiers. I use the term advisedly: for difference of age makes no difference in this; from the very oldest to the youngest, all who are sincerely striving to follow Christ are truly fellow-soldiers to one another; nor do I know of any sight more beautiful, nor one which ought to be more kindling to us who are older, than to see a younger man, and still more, to see a young boy, striving fearlessly in his Master's service, and shaming by his courageous zeal our perhaps more measured and colder efforts. Surely we should spare no encouragement, no marks of visible sympathy, nay, of high respect and admiration, for one who is so nobly doing his duty; nor, on the other hand, should be slow in expressing our strong disgust at those who are labouring to turn him from the right way; nor in visiting their conduct with the heaviest punishment, as well as feeling towards their characters the utmost abhorrence and contempt, should they endeavour, by acts of direct violence and oppression, and by setting others against him, to make his trial here harder than it will be in after life, harder than his age can justly be expected to bear.

But before I leave this part of my subject, there yet remain a few words to be said on it. There may be limits to our interference; there may be

outward restraints which it would be unwise in us to impose, looking to the strength and manliness of your characters hereafter. But there need be no limits at all to what you do for this same end amongst yourselves; the easier you can make the practice of all good to the weakest and youngest among you, the more odious and difficult you can render the practice of evil, so much the better. All improvement which any society can work in itself, and in its own tone; any degree of influence which it can freely yield to goodness, any degree of disrepute which it can heap upon wickedness, is wholly and most highly desirable. You need not fear lest you should thus make the service of Christ too easy, when compared with the temptations of after life. For you would do no more than might be done in after life also; it would be merely that fair growth of good, by its own proper strength, that fair defeat of evil, owing to its own vileness, which may be, and would be effected in the world at large, if Christ's servants did their duty. And certainly it would be a glorious leaven for leavening the whole mass, might we hope for any such blessedness upon us; if the young men who yearly go forth from this place into the world were to uphold in every place to which they might be called, the banner of the cross; were to employ all their faculties, and sanctify all their know-

ledge, by devoting them avowedly to the service of God.

But far humbler and far soberer prospects are those with which we have most concern. Let us consider farther the words of the text, and observe how Daniel, when he knew that the writing was signed which threatened him with death for his obedience to God, yet "went into his house, and with his windows open towards Jerusalem, kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks to God." His windows were open to Jerusalem, that his face, during his prayer, might be turned towards the temple of God, from which he was banished far away. We see at once what is the scene of God's presence, from which we are living in exile, and towards which, in all our prayers, our hearts should be turned. If they are not, then shall we kneel upon our knees three times a day, or thrice three times, and pray and give thanks to God, and yet all will be useless. Nay, consider: when we go to rest this night, it is likely that most of us will have knelt upon their knees, and prayed, and given thanks to God, since they arose in the morning, oftener than is recorded of Daniel. Reckoning our services here, and our prayers in private, and we shall probably, when we lie down to sleep, have kneeled upon our knees four times, at the least, since the morning. But

has the house meanwhile been open towards Jerusalem? Has the house of our spirit, this mind of ours, with all the manifold chambers of its thoughts and desires, been so opened, so purged from the sin and confusion of earthly things, that we could look out straight and steadily towards that place wherein God ever dwells? Or has it been so shut fast, that though our knees might bend, and though our tongues might utter the words of prayer and praise, yet to the eyes of our soul all was dark and dim? we looked not beyond the land of our captivity; our thoughts were fast bound beside the waters of Babylon.

Yet again, the house may be opened towards Jerusalem; the sight and the thought of glorious things may refresh our spirits; we may, like Peter on the mount, see the glory of Christ and rejoice, and say, with all sincerity, like Peter, It is good for us to be here. But what if this prospect be enjoyed so seldom that it takes no firm hold upon us; it does not mix with our daily thoughts and duties? then should we observe the other part of the verse, that three times a day did Daniel pray and give thanks to his God, as he did aforetime. It was not any unusual show of devotion; he did neither more nor less than he was used to do; three times in every day did he open his house towards Jeruralem, and call upon God. The two things together are the great secret of a holy life. Spiritual

prayer, lest what we say be no better than the vain repetitions of the heathen; and frequent prayer, lest the spirit, being exercised too seldom, should leave us during the greater part of our lives the servants of sin. And here is one of our great defects; we do not enough attend to the exhortation of our Lord and his Apostle, to watch and pray, not now and then, but evermore, lest we enter into temptation; the spirit, indeed, is willing, but the flesh is weak. The spirit is willing; few of us, I trust, are either hypocrites or unbelievers; we do wish, in our inmost hearts, to serve God; but the flesh is weak, and we do not enough practise the appointed means to strengthen it. We trust, perhaps, too much to our good principles; we know that it is our intention to do our duty, but we do not enough reckon for the many things which clash with these intentions, and, in little things, overcome them; we do not go often enough in the day to obtain fresh aid from Him without whom we can do nothing. There is a snare in this which betrays us; we think that we know Christ's commands; it may be, that we are so well acquainted with the Scriptures, that we could repeat and explain whole portions of them, by our memory only, if called upon to do so: we feel so true in our allegiance to God, that we have no temptation to disobey him. And this is true, perhaps, when we think of him; but it is the art of

the enemy of our souls to hinder us from thinking of him, to keep the question of obeying him or not as much as possible out of our minds; not to alarm us by tempting us to any great sin, but to lull us by keeping us in the common routine of our duties, and contriving to present to us little temptations of indolence, of ill-temper, and of selfishness, which we give way to imperceptibly, because they do not seem of sufficient importance to call our principles into question, or, in other words, to make us think whether we are pleasing or displeasing God. The effect is, I fear, that during too large a part of every day our state of mind is not such as it should be. God is not before our face continually; and the result shows itself, perhaps, in its earliest stage, in a want of concern for the souls of others. It is, indeed, unnatural that we should be anxious and watchful for our neighbours, when we are not watchful for ourselves. But this is not all: our faith, ere long, will suffer also; for faith is not kept alive, in that sense in which the Scripture speaks of it, without a constant communion with God. True it is, the evidence is the same, but we are not in the same condition to receive it; and much more than as a mere matter of evidence: faith is an abiding sense of God's reality, and this we weaken by not thinking of God enough. Then, with our faith weakened, we do not overcome the world; we are not sharers with Christ in his victory.

Let us then remember the three points of the text on which I have been dwelling. Let us first steadily bear in mind that the writing is signed against us; that if we will serve Christ, we must be partakers of his sufferings; we must take up our cross, and follow him. Yet, though we know this, yet not the less for this knowledge, let us resolve to serve him steadily; and that we may serve him, let us, with our hearts opened towards heaven, and receiving fully into them the light of the Spirit of God, kneel down on our knees before him, not once a day, much less once a week only, but often, but perpetually; and yet more, when we cannot kneel down on our knees, let us, while standing or sitting, in the intervals of our work or of our amusement, link together, as it were, our more special and solemn devotions, by a golden chain of heavenward thoughts and humble prayers, not trusting to our general good intentions, but refreshing our continued decays and failings with as continued a recourse to the ever-open fountain of the grace of God.

SERMON XXII.

THE LORD'S DAY.

GENESIS, ii. 3.

And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.

THERE are two ways of reading these early chapters of the Old Testament. One is, to take them as we find them, and to understand them according to the simple meaning of the words, just as if we knew nothing of any other book in the world; the other way is, to interpret them by the New Testament, to suppose that the writer of them had as much revealed to him as we have now revealed to us, and that the Gospel is to be found as really, though not as plainly, in the first chapters of Genesis, as in the Epistles of St. Paul, St. Peter, and St. John.

For instance, in the story of Cain and Abel, those who follow merely the story itself, believe that God had no respect to the offering of Cain, because it was offered insincerely or grudgingly; and that he had respect unto Abel's offering, because it was given out of a true and grateful heart. But those who find the Gospel in all this early history, believe that Abel's offering was respected, because it was offered with faith in the blood of Christ, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. They say that Cain, not believing in, or despising, the promised atonement, offered merely of the fruits of his land; but that Abel, understanding that without shedding of blood was no remission, offered the firstlings of his flock, as a type of Him who was to come.

Again, in a similar manner, with regard to the words of the text. Those who do not go beyond the story, consider the mention here made of God's blessing and sanctifying the seventh day as merely giving the reason why the commandment to keep the seventh day holy was afterwards given through Moses, that, as it is said in the fourth commandment itself, "In six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and rested the seventh day, wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it;" so, in giving an account of the creation, the same thing was related, merely for the sake of those who already had the commandment, as a reason

and a sanction for keeping it. Others, again, who add to the letter of what they find written, believe that the commandment to keep the seventh day holy was given to man from the beginning of the world; that Adam observed it, and all the patriarchs; that it was only renewed by Moses, and not first given; and that therefore not the Jews only, but all mankind are bound always to obey it.

I will give another instance out of the same chapter. God there says to Adam, "In the day that thou eatest of the fruit of the tree of knowledge, thou shalt surely die." Now some understand by this no more than the first plain meaning of the words, that Adam should die instead of living for ever; that he should turn again to his dust, and then all his thoughts should perish. Others, again, knowing in how much fuller a sense the words "death" and "life" are frequently used in Scripture, take the threat uttered to Adam as conveying a much more awful meaning: they understand it as saying that he should die everlastingly, not once only, and then be as though he had never been born, but to be for ever lost to God and all happiness, and for ever *feel* that he *was* lost.

These examples will give some notion of the two ways of reading the early chapters of Genesis which I spoke of. In most of the popular commentaries on the Scriptures, and in tracts, and sermons of the present day, you will find the se-

cond of the two ways generally adopted; and it has been followed so confidently, and so commonly, that many readers I believe would be surprised to hear that the book of Genesis says nothing of Abel's faith in the atonement of Christ, nothing of the command to hallow the Sabbath being known to the patriarchs, nothing of Adam's being condemned to die everlastingly.

How, then, is an unlearned reader to judge in such a matter? It is impossible that he can judge with certainty, nor is it needful that he should. But as far as probability is concerned, he can judge here better than on many other subjects. If indeed an interpretation be grounded on the meaning of a word; if it be said that our translation is wrong, and does not give the true sense of the original; then of course a person who does not know the original language cannot judge for himself, he must believe what seems to him to be the best authority. But if a passage be allowed to be rightly translated, but it is argued that it must mean something more than it seems to mean, on account of certain reasons drawn from the New Testament; then if those reasons are given, an unlearned reader, if he be sensible and well acquainted with his Bible, may judge of the force of those reasons very nearly as well as a learned one.

Happily, however, the question in general is

only one of curiosity; for whether Abel's offering was accepted because it was sincere, or because he knew of the future sacrifice of Christ, can make no possible difference to our salvation. We know full well why *we* are accepted, and through whom *we* stand, and that if now we turn from God's way of salvation, and seek to justify ourselves by our own most imperfect doings, that it will be in us the mere offering of Cain, given at once in pride and in fear. Or what matters it whether Adam was threatened with death, in the sense of being turned to nothing, or with a state of eternal misery? The terms of our own state are sure and plain; they on Christ's left hand shall go away into everlasting punishment, "where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." What is so spoken of cannot be the mere act of passing into a state of sleep, from which we shall never wake indeed, but in which we should never be disturbed. There is no doubt that, as far as we are concerned, life and death are terms completely opposite; life, means the fulness of joy; death, in like manner, means the fulness of misery.

But it may be said, that with regard to the words of the text, the interpretation of them may affect our practice; for if Adam was commanded to keep the Sabbath, it must be binding upon us and on our children; if, on the other hand, it was a command given to the Jews only,

why should we be bound to keep it any more than the commandment of circumcision?

There is some truth in this; and for this very reason I chose the words of the text to be the subject of my discourse this day. For, undoubtedly, the keeping or not keeping the Sunday cannot be a light matter; and it would be very mischievous to fancy on wrong grounds that we were not bound to keep it; while again, it might be very trying to us if we believed that we were bound to keep it from reasons which will not bear examining. For if we rest our weight upon ice that will not bear us, it is of no use to us that there is ice close by which would have borne us very well had we known of it; we trusted to what was false, and we fell when our support sank under us. So it is with our opinions when they rest upon error. If that error be clearly made out to us to be an error, our opinion, unless when we happen to be interested in maintaining it, is very apt to be carried away along with it[a]; although, in truth, it might and ought to have stood for ever, had we but known how to rest it upon its true foundation.

Now, first, whether the patriarchs were or were not commanded to keep the Sabbath, a thing which we can never know, it is no safe foundation for our thinking ourselves bound to keep it, that

[a] Οἱ μὴ ἀληθεῖς τῶν λόγων καταφρονούμενοι καὶ τἀληθὲς προσαναιροῦσιν.—Aristotle, Ethic. Nicomach. X. 1.

the patriarchs kept it before the Law was given, and that the commandment had existed before the time of Moses, and was only confirmed by him and repeated. This, I say, even if it were true, is no sure foundation for us. For if the Law itself be done away in Christ, much more the things before the Law. The Law was not a going backwards in the scheme of God's providence, but a going forwards: it revealed to the children of Israel much more than the patriarchs knew, although it did not open to them the gate of everlasting life. But if Christians have outgrown the Law, so that it is called the weak elements or rudiments of knowledge, the mere teaching of children, which grown men do not need: much more must we have outgrown the discipline of the times before the Law. The Sabbath, then, may have been necessary to the patriarchs, for we know that it was needed even at a later time; they who had the light of the Law could not do without it. But it would by no means follow that it was needed now, when, having put away the helps of our childhood, we ought to be grown up into the full-grown man, into the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

It does not, then, really signify how we understand the words of the text. For, on the one hand, if we choose to believe that the patriarchs, from Adam downwards, were commanded to keep

the Sabbath, it by no means follows that the command is binding upon us; and on the other hand, if it were given to the Jews only, and was unknown to them till they arrived at Mount Sinai, still it does not follow that we are not bound to keep it now. Our practice, then, has nothing to do with the interpretation of the words of my text; they neither prove us right in keeping the Sunday, nor would they prove us wrong if we were to give the observance of it up.

But I must go somewhat further; for I know the real question is, Are we right in keeping the Sunday, or are we not right? The fourth commandment does not answer this question by itself; no, not though it be used every Sunday in our own service. For we do not keep the fourth commandment, seeing that we do not keep holy the seventh day, but the first; not the day on which God rested from all his works, but the day on which he raised up Jesus Christ from the dead. And as to altering a command of the Law, he must know little of the obedience which the Law requires who could think that men might alter it at their discretion. Further, if we look into the Catechism of our own Church, we shall find the question asked of the child, "What dost thou chiefly learn by these commandments?" and the answer is, "I learn two things; my duty towards God, and my duty towards my neighbour." Now it is

clear that the duty towards God is learned from the four first commandments; the duty towards our neighbour, from the six last. The question then goes on—"What is thy duty towards God?" or, in other words, What is the lesson taught by the four first commandments? And the answer, as we may all remember, says not one word of keeping the Sabbath; it is not this, according to our Catechism, which we learn from the fourth commandment, but, "to worship him, to give him thanks, to put our whole trust in him, to honour his holy name and his word, and to serve him truly all the days of our life." It does not then appear, merely from our reading the fourth commandment in our Church service, that we are obliged to keep it, without question, as the law of God to us, and to keep holy the seventh day, while we do, in fact, keep holy the first.

All this, I think, is quite true; and yet we are bound to keep holy the Sunday; and it would be great wickedness or great folly to give up the observance of it. We are bound, by the spirit of the fourth commandment, because we are not fit to do without it. God commanded his people, in the old times, to keep holy the Sabbath day. He commanded them this when they were very ignorant, and very worldly-minded; when, had he told them to worship them every day in the spirit, they would have spent every day without worshipping

him at all; their hearts were too hard for a devotion so pure. Now, God having given this command to his people, it is manifest, that so long as they are in the same state as when he gave it them, they are bound to keep it; so long as the same sickness remains, they will need the same remedy. It was intended that the Gospel should put us in a very different state, so that we should need the command no more. It was intended so, and St. Paul hoped fully that it would be so; and therefore he writes to the Colossians, "Let no man judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days, which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ." Such were his hopes for his fellow Christians, and to show that God designed them to be free from the Law, the command, in its letter, was kept no more; the seventh day, the Jews' sabbath, was no longer observed by Christians. But St. Paul's hopes were disappointed, and the gracious designs of God were thwarted. The state of Christians was not changed; the old sickness was not thrown off; and therefore the old remedy was still needed. As then, the change of the day from the seventh to the first shows us what God designed for us, shows us the heavenly liberty to which we were called; so the long and unvaried practice of the Church in keeping the first day holy, shows us their sad

feeling and confession that they were not fit for that liberty; that the Law, which God would fain have loosed from off them, was still needed to be their schoolmaster. If, then, any man will say, I am not under the Law, the Sabbath is but a shadow of things to come; but now that Christ, who is the substance, has appeared, what need have we of the shadow?—if any man so speaks, and claims so high a measure of the Spirit of Christ, let him examine himself most carefully, to see whether indeed the free Spirit of Christ be in him: let him consider whether the Spirit of Christ has so perfectly overcome the weakness of his flesh, that evil desires are dead in him; that indolence, that passion, that covetousness, that whatsoever exalts itself against the obedience of Christ is become quite weeded out of his nature. If he be such an one, so rich in the love of God in Christ, so perfectly conformed to the Spirit of God; no doubt he needs not for himself the aid of carnal ordinances, nor needs he the help of one day out of seven to enkindle his heavenly affections, when all his life is passed as if he were in heaven already. And yet, even could such a man be found, were it no dream that he existed amongst us, yet even he could not profane the rest of our Christian holyday, and be blameless. For still there would apply to him the charitable counsel of St. Paul, in a similar case, "Take heed, lest by any means

this liberty of yours become a stumbling-block to them that are weak. For if any man see thee who hast knowledge, despising the ordinances of the Lord's day, shall not the conscience of him who is weak be emboldened to despise them also, and, through thy knowledge, shall thy weak brother perish, for whom Christ died. But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak consciences, ye sin against Christ." Not the holiest and most perfect Christian, therefore, could, without sin, profane the Lord's day; because he would be tempting others, by his example, to despise a help which they most needed. But for us, in general, not for others only, but for ourselves, do we require to keep holy the Lord's day. To us, the bond of the commandment, broken by Christ's Spirit, has, through our unworthiness, closed again. We still need the Law; we need its restraints; we need its aid to our weakness; and, though Christ's blood has freed us from its bitter penalty, yet we may not refuse to listen to the wisdom of its voice, because the terror of its threatenings is taken away from the true believer.

SERMON XXIII.

THE HOLY ANGELS.

MATTHEW, xviii. 10.

Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.

IT is not one of the least wonderful peculiarities of the Scriptures, that although their whole subject relates to God, who is invisible, and although, in the New Testament especially, their whole tendency is to lift us up in heart and mind from the things which are seen to those which are unseen, yet there is in them so little of that which furnishes food to the fanciful and the superstitious. When we look around us and above us; when we consider what an almost infinite variety of beings, quite beyond the reach of our unassisted senses to discover, the powers of science have made known to us, descending to atoms so minute as hardly to

be conceived capable of life, it is most natural to imagine also that the ascending scale in creation may be no less infinite, that the beings greater and better than ourselves, whom yet we can neither see nor hear, may be no less numerous than those inferior beings whose orders appear to go on almost without end. And as science, such science as is attainable by us now, has shown us the existence of so many inferior creatures, of which otherwise we should have had no notion at all, so there may be a science, that is, a revelation of truth, not attainable by us now, which might open to us not less widely the orders of being above us, and show us those around us and among us every hour, of whom now we have no knowledge.

Reason shows that this may be; but as it is the law of our earthly being that with these higher orders of creation we shall have no practical communion, so the Scripture, whose whole tendency is practical, has made to us few direct revelations concerning them. The language in which they are spoken of is taken from the common belief of the Jews, and used for the purpose of conveying some moral lesson, whose truth is a very different thing from the actual reality of the form in which it is contained. All, as it seems to me, that we can safely gather from the Scripture on this subject, is this: that we are not the highest beings in creation; that there are others raised above us, we

know not with what differences, or in what degree; and that although we can hold no communion with them, yet they are not unconcerned in what regards us; but while serving their God and ours, minister in ways unseen and unknown to those whom their Lord and ours is not ashamed to call his brethren.

The practical use of what is told us concerning these beings may be best learnt from the words of the text,—"Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven:" or, as nearly the same sentiment is expressed in another place, "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."

Now what is meant to be impressed upon us by both these passages is, that in our carelessness about sin and God's service, we stand, as it were, alone in creation; that higher beings view with interest every one who is striving to do God's will; that they rejoice over every soul gained over from the cause of evil to the cause of good. We know how worse than indifferent we often are to both of these things; that those who are called in the text "little ones," that is, persons amid great want of knowledge, and with neither outward circumstances nor force of character to commend them to general notice, but yet really desirous of

doing their duty; that these "little ones" we are far from particularly respecting, and, farther still, from helping them on amidst the difficulties of their way. We care not about removing temptations from them; nay, we often carelessly throw temptation in their path. But this is because we ourselves have not learned to know the truth concerning sin and concerning righteousness. It is our blindness, inherited with our birth, so common in this only world to which our experience reaches, that it seems to us natural; and we mark the contrary as something extraordinary. But the only world to which our experience reaches is a corrupt world; and its judgments of moral good and evil are corrupt also. All God's creatures, however, are not corrupt as we are; the judgment of our little world is not the judgment of the universe. And this, if we take it rightly, is the truth revealed to us in the story of the Fall. It is not original sin that is a doctrine of revelation, but rather original righteousness. Our natural sinfulness is not a matter of revelation, but of experience. Every one who has ever studied his own heart, every one who has watched the earliest signs of feeling and character in a child, knows sufficiently that the actual nature of mankind, that nature which they bring with them into the world, is already prone to evil. But what we could not have known without revelation is, that in the be-

ginning it was not so; that what we see is the wreck of what was originally good, not a thing inherently and by God's design made to be what it is. What this world, and the race of mankind was at the beginning, other worlds, and other and higher beings, have continued to be, and still are. I know not of any thought at once more humbling and more comforting, than, when looking upwards into infinite space, to feel that those thousand worlds may be still good in the sight of God as when they were first created; that we alone are at variance with the perfect harmony of the universe; and yet, that instead of being despised or abhorred by those purer beings who have not sinned as we have, they are rather more joyful than ourselves when any of us are rescued from our evil state; and that He, the Lord of all, sought us out amidst so many that went not astray; and gave his help, not to angels, but to the seed of Abraham, that he might save that which was lost.

These are some of the thoughts which the name of God's holy angels may fitly awaken in our minds. But more especially, Christ himself has coupled them with his warning, "that we despise not one of these little ones." "It must needs be that temptations or difficulties come, but woe unto him by whom they come!" "It must needs be," that is, it is morally impossible, that it should not be so; if we look at what our nature is, and how

few set themselves in earnest about renewing it, we may feel quite sure that both we ourselves, and every individual with whom we are acquainted, will meet in the world his share of difficulties and temptations. But let us for ourselves, every one individual amongst us, take heed for his own personal part, that neither for himself or others does he assist in creating these difficulties and temptations. There can be nothing said more strongly than the words of our Lord, in which he declares that for him who does so create them, "it were better that a mill-stone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea." It is a guilt distinct from the general guilt of our own sins in the sight of God, and one which greatly aggravates that. If we lived alone in the world, then our badness would hurt ourselves only; it would be sin, but it would not be what the Scripture calls "offence," that is, conduct to hurt the souls of others. But we do not live alone; we cannot act independently of others: our good and evil must have an effect upon them; our good must bring forth fruit in the hearts of others also; our sin must contain that other and deeper guilt, of tempting or disposing to sin some of God's little ones.

Now then, it may not be improper to appeal particularly to those who not long since were called more immediately to the service of their

Saviour by receiving the rite of confirmation; still more particularly to those, and it is delightful to think that they were not a very small number, who, soon after they had been confirmed, came to communicate at the Lord's supper. All in both these classes declared their desire to be Christ's real servants; and those of the last class, in particular, seemed to me to set to their seal, by coming to the Lord's table, that their declaration given in confirmation, was given in earnest. I regarded every one who on that day was a partaker of the holy communion, as one who was ready to strive in that great cause, which it were far better for us to die than to abandon, the cause of goodness and of Christ. I know that promises are not always performed; that to say, is sometimes one thing, and to do, another. Yet after all, although there is much falsehood in the world, yet there is much more truth; although some speak to us only to deceive, yet experience warrants us in our general practice of believing what our neighbour tells us. Life could not go on, if in our intercourse with one another, belief were not beyond all proportion more reasonable than mistrust. And therefore I think it is quite right to rejoice with hearty thankfulness to God for all those who on that day gathered round Christ's table. Therefore, also, I call upon you now, not to forget your profession then made; I call upon

all of you who were either confirmed at that time, or had been confirmed before, to remember into whose service you have entered yourselves, with what blessed helpers and associates, even the holy angels, who behold the face of God; and under what leader, even the Lord of men and of angels, even the Living One, who for our sakes died and rose again, you are engaged through life to struggle. We are engaged, all of us, to set forward Christ's kingdom; to put down evil; to help and set forward good. We are engaged to do this in many various ways, but all with one common spirit. We are engaged, so far as our power goes, to make goodness pleasant, honourable, and easy to every one of our brethren; to throw around evil all possible hindrances; to make it shameful, disgusting, contemptible, hateful. He who does so is serving God, and is a fellow-worker with Christ's Spirit; he who does not, is serving sin, and is a fellow-worker with the spirit of evil.

Let it not be thought that when I speak of making evil shameful, and hateful, and contemptible, I am urging that we should hate and despise the persons of those who do evil; but the distinction is most plain and easy to make, if we do but try to be as Christ was in this world, as he is at this hour, as he will be till the day of judgment. He came to seek and to save that which was lost; and though there are some, it is to be

feared, whom he knows to be beyond all recovery even now, and some of whom even we may suspect it, yet there are none of whom we should so despair as to cease to pray for them, or to feel a willingness at any moment to receive them as our brethren, and help them with all our powers. There are none whom we may hate; but happily, in all common cases, there are none whom we may not even cheerfully and hopefully labour even now to benefit. But I need not say more on this point, for whatever of unkindness or persecution exists among you, there is no fear of any one being persecuted on moral grounds, because others are good and he is evil.

No; the unkindness, the persecution, whatever it be, which exists here, is, I am afraid, of a very different sort; it is not so much directed by the good against the evil, out of abhorrence of their evil; but by the evil against the good, or against the weak; not because they abhor evil, but because they care neither for it nor for good. Am I saying too much when I state it as at least doubtful, whether of two boys who were to come here at the same moment, the one delicate, perhaps timid, but amiable, and really desirous to please God and to do his duty; the other active and lively, but wholly unprincipled, ready to lie for himself and his companions, ready to drink, to get in debt, to engage in any thing forbidden, con-

stantly idle, and encouraging idleness, coarse, and insolent, and overbearing; whether the first would not be very likely to be persecuted and rendered miserable, whilst the latter would not only escape all annoyance and general disgust, but would be sure to gain considerable influence? God forbid that I should say that this arose from a deliberate hatred of good amongst you and love of evil; it is no such thing; but I will tell you what it does arise from, and that is, because you have not the opposite feeling, because you do not love good so much as to respect it, and show it kindness, wherever you see it, even when coupled with something of weakness; because you do not hate evil, or have not courage enough to show your hatred of it; but when you see it joined with some qualities that you like, and others that you fear, you are ready not only to forgive it, but to join with it, and to encourage it by your manifest countenance.

This is not fancy, and you know that it is not. I should be sorry, indeed, to be alluding to any one particular case, either past or present; but every one knows that instances of both these sorts of characters are never wanting, and every one knows also what reception they generally meet with. But could this possibly be the case if Christ's servants did their duty; if all who have declared that they will serve him were to re-

member to what that service pledges them? I have seen the thing enough necessarily; but it has always excited my astonishment that there should be, both in men and boys, so strange a hatred of obedience and of law; that good becomes distasteful, because it is commanded; evil is favoured, because it is forbidden. This, at the bottom, is the secret of the favour which men often show to a breach of the laws of the land, and which is shown here to a breach of the laws of the school. No doubt servility is a base thing, and honest independence is a noble one; but far worse than servility is disobedience to commands that are just and good; and far nobler than any independence is the most entire submission, when shown to God, and to God's law. But if that which God commands loses its favour in our eyes, because man commands it also; if we think it so glorious to disobey man, that we care not even to disobey God in doing it; let us take heed what sort of spirit of liberty and independence this is; whether it is not theirs who are the lowest and vilest of all slaves, the slaves of their own wickedness. For be we sure of this, that we have but a choice of masters, good and evil: if we are the servants of good, we are free from evil; if we are the servants of evil, we are free from good: but the servants of one or the other we must be, both now and for all eternity. And there is no liberty to be found but

in loving our service thoroughly, so that its cause becomes our own. Do we shrink from gaining this liberty in evil? Do we think it horrible to be so utterly sold to wickedness, body and soul, as to rejoice in the devil's work, to have no repentance or remorse but for some evil that we had left undone; no hope and joy but in the good which we had trampled on and despised? Is this indeed horrible? then is there only one other liberty, the liberty of the Spirit of Christ, the liberty to be gained by faithful obedience. By serving God, by humbly obeying him, by keeping every command issued for his service, we may gain indeed a perfect liberty, the liberty of just men made perfect, the liberty of those blessed angels who joy in all that God delights in, and hate all that he hates; the liberty of the sons of God, given to us by Him who alone can give it; by Him who abideth in the house for ever, the Son of God, Jesus Christ our Lord.

SERMON XXIV.

CREEDS.

Acts, iv. 24.

They lifted up their voice with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, who hast made heaven, and earth, the sea, and all that in them is.

These words, and those which follow them, may be called the earliest and best specimen of the nature of a Christian creed, when used in the public service of the church; for the use of the Creed in the Catechism, in the Baptismal Service, and in that for the Visitation of the Sick, is not quite the same with its use in our daily service. Nor is this altogether unimportant to notice; at least it appears to me to make a very great difference as to the propriety of using the Creeds in our service, and as to the feeling with which we should repeat them. In the Catechism, the Creed.

as we all know, is made a sort of text for instruction in Christian truth; in the Baptismal Service, and in that for the Sick, it is made a touchstone, to know whether a man is fit to enter, or whether he may be considered as remaining to the end in the society of Christians; but in our daily service it partakes much more of the nature of a triumphant hymn; and accordingly, not only is it left to the choice of the congregation whether it shall be said or sung, but it might be imagined that the church esteemed the latter the preferable method: for whereas the Rubric directs that the psalms and other hymns shall be either *said or sung*, of the Creeds it is directed, in a contrary order, that they shall be either *sung or said*. This, indeed, may only be accident, though, if it be, it is a curious coincidence; but whether it be accident or design, it certainly affords a very good illustration of the light in which the Creeds should be regarded; not as reviving the memory of old disputes, and a sort of declaration of war against those who may not agree with us in them, but as principally a free and triumphant confession of thanksgiving to God for all the mighty works which he has done for us.

And of such a nature, we may perceive, was that most primitive creed, if I may so call it, from which the words of the text are taken. The apostles, Peter and John, had just been enabled

to work a remarkable miracle, in healing the lameness of a man of more than forty years of age, who had been lame from his birth. They had been brought before the rulers of the Jews; had been commanded by them not to speak in the name of Jesus; had declared in answer that they could not but speak of what they had seen and heard; had again been threatened by the rulers, but could not avoid seeing that they were in some degree overawed and afraid to punish them; and lastly, had been suffered to go again to their own company. When they had rejoined them, all felt strongly how much they were engaged in God's cause, and how clearly they were sharing that enmity which the Scripture had foretold should be directed against the Lord and against his Christ. They therefore acknowledged, with full hearts, the power and goodness of Him whose servants they had been made; and that He against whom so many were banded was, in truth, the anointed of God, who had shown forth his mighty power already, and would, as they trusted, still continue to do so. Their creed, therefore, is a thankful acknowledgment of mercies past, coupled with an earnest prayer for a continuance of them for the time to come.

But this confession of God's mercies in Christ could not, in the earliest times of the church, be made with safety. It was a confession which was

often the sure forerunner of martyrdom. And therefore, when these troublous times were over, and the confession which had been so dear in the very midst of dangers might now be safely uttered in the face of the world; when the church had, in one sense, won its victory, so far as the outward contest was concerned, between Christians and heathens; then there was a yet stronger feeling of thankfulness in declaring what God and Christ had done for them, inasmuch as their confession not only repeated their spiritual blessings, but, by the very fact of its being so publicly made without danger, reminded them also of the success of Christ's cause on earth; that they held in their hands, as it were, an earnest of God's promises for eternity, as even on earth he had raised them from so small and despised a company to one so great and numerous, and which reckoned the princes of the earth amongst its members. So that scarcely any part of the daily service could be more solemn than the Creed, combining, as it did, the thought of so many past deliverances, with blessings actual and to come; containing, in so short a compass, the rehearsal of those high privileges which made it so glorious a distinction to be a member of Christ's body.

The ignorance, then, of those who repeat the Creed as a prayer is only a little way removed from real and useful knowledge. In form it is not a

prayer; and they who ignorantly say it over in their private devotions, as such, may be more truly said to use it as a charm. But, as in the case with the confession in the text, and with all other thanksgivings, it implies a prayer; and as we utter it, so the thought of prayer should mingle with our thankfulness, that we may continue to retain always a personal interest in the blessings which we acknowledge; and that the time may never come when they may appear to us no blessings at all.

It seems, then, that that minute dwelling upon every word of the Creeds, which has been the practice of expositors; that careful recording what particular sect or opinion every clause may be considered as combating, so far from being necessary, in order to our using the Creeds aright in our daily service, would actually injure our use of them, by mixing up other thoughts and feelings by no means akin to those of devotion. And though there is great reason to fear that parts of our actual creeds were really written in this hostile spirit; as, for instance, the clause which speaks of the Holy Ghost proceeding from the Son as well as the Father, was inserted in the Nicene Creed, by the Latin Church, because it was a point obnoxious to the Greek Church; yet that may be innocently used, which was in the first instance done blamably; and what was put

in specially and invidiously as a matter of controversy, may be repeated in intentional neglect of its controversial peculiarities, as a general expression of the truth, that in the gift of the Holy Spirit, as in all other mercies of our redemption, God and Christ may never be separated. Or again, with regard to another clause which was inserted in the Apostles' Creed much later than almost all the other clauses, that, namely, which speaks of Christ descending into hell; what occasion have we to trouble ourselves about the various fond notions which may have been once connected with this expression, when, without entering on matters unrevealed and undiscoverable, we may receive it as an assurance that Christ shared in all respects the condition of our nature; that as he died like us, and rose again as we trust to rise, so whatever be our state in the interval between our death and resurrection, of that also Christ was a partaker, and has blessed it to all his true servants?

But other points are mentioned in the Creed, not connected with controversy, but obscure in their expression; which many, perhaps, repeat without understanding their meaning. Such, for instance, are, in the Apostles' Creed, the clauses which speak of the holy catholic church, and the communion of saints. What benefits or privileges are here recorded which can fitly be re-

corded in a hymn of thanksgiving? With regard to the first of these, the holy catholic church, there can be little difficulty to those who remember how frequently and earnestly St. Paul spoke of it as one of the great revelations of the gospel, that God's church was no longer to be confined to one nation, but was to take in the true children of God from every race and country in the world. And though we have been so long used to consider this as natural, that it excites no wonder in our minds, and little thankfulness; yet the spirit of the truth so revealed is of eternal value; and I know not any thing more delightful to a Christian temper than to dwell on this particular character of Christ's church, its being catholic or universal: that while divided from our fellow-men by so many barriers, difference of race, of colour, of country, of language, of laws and customs, of tempers and opinions, and provoked sometimes by the uncharitableness of others to sin ourselves in the same way by imitating them, and to judge them not to belong to Christ's church who would so untruly and so mischievously deny that their brethren belong to it; yet still Christ's church is not so narrow as our foolishness or impatience would make it; and with all good men who call upon his name, however divided from us in every thing beside, we are yet fellow-members

of his body, and shall be saved together through him.

And with all good men who call upon his name, we are united in what is well called the communion of saints, or of the people of God. I am afraid, indeed, that this, which ought to be a matter of joyful thanksgiving to all of us, must much more be a matter of anxious prayer: it is not actually enjoyed so much as it should be desired. We all, I fear, miss the openness of that spirit which should make us fasten, as by an instinctive love, upon every one who bears the mark of Christ, on every one who is walking in his faith and fear. We allow the forms and distinctions of the world to keep a distance between us, when each, perhaps is, in his own heart, suffering from the want of Christian communion. One practice we have altogether laid aside, and not surely without some injury, the habit of mutual confession. Of course, I lay the stress on the word "mutual;" for the confession that supposes a priesthood, and which is made not to one another, but to one alone, is of no help to us in increasing our Christian communion. Nor again do I speak of that formal and almost public confession, which although made by Christians to each other, is yet so revolting to the natural delicacy which shrinks from opening its heart indiscriminately, or to

persons who are not the objects of its own choice, that I could not wish to see it practised more generally. Yet surely it cannot be quite good for us, that after we reach manhood, at any rate, our lips should never be opened save to God, as to any of our faults and weaknesses. It seems a needless sacrifice of an aid surely not superfluous, that Christians living among Christians should yet each fight their own fight alone, alone struggle with their temptations, alone review their difficulties, alone, and not with the voice of united prayer, come before God for their deliverance. Undoubtedly such confession should be entirely voluntary, it should be mutual, it should not and could not be indiscriminate; but the question is, whether we might not make more of it than we do, whether a stronger feeling of Christian communion would not naturally lead to Christian confession, and whether that again would not, in turn, draw more closely the bands of Christian communion.

I do not suppose that this could be done abruptly or speedily. Persons of education, of strong sense, of great delicacy of mind, would shrink from adopting a language which has too often nothing that is either sensible or delicate. But is there not a defect in themselves, that they do not seem disposed to set an example of a religious language of another kind; that there seems no advance ever

made in our intercourse towards a Christian communion; that acquaintance proceeds, perhaps, from its first common-place language upon the most indifferent subjects, to something higher and deeper, that respect and esteem may be shown; that grave points are discussed; that our intellectual, and even our moral nature, will gradually gain courage to develop itself. But there we stand, as it were, spell-bound; our spiritual nature ventures not from the shelter of our own bosoms; in whatever of good and beautiful we do not fear to express our sympathy, yet we dare not breathe our common love for Christ, our common hope of glory. Must it be ever thus? or might not the expression of such feelings find its time and place, not certainly always nor everywhere, but sometimes, and with some persons, instead of being only uttered by one, and heard silently by others in our assemblies for public worship?

If there be any truth in this, then there is something wanting in all of us, which we may perhaps do well to think of. Many, I verily believe, have the feelings themselves, and would delight to open them; but they check the impulse: and is it not true, that the feeling always restrained from its expression becomes at last actually weaker; while undoubtedly their use and natural expression would serve to strengthen them? It would be a comfort

to find that we were not serving Christ alone; and Christians, gaining confidence from the knowledge of their numbers and their union, would be better able to resist the numbers, always, alas! sure to be sufficiently visible; and the union, not avowed indeed, but real for all purposes of mischief, of those who are the servants of evil.

SERMON XXV.

CHRISTIAN OBEDIENCE.

JEREMIAH, XXXVI. 23.

And it came to pass, that when Jehudi had read three or four leaves, the king cut it with the penknife, and cast it into the fire that was on the hearth, until all the roll was consumed in the fire that was on the hearth.

IN the two lessons from the Old Testament, chosen for this day's service, we have a picture of the two extremes of obedience and disobedience, standing in strong contrast to each other. I call the case of the Rechabites the extreme of obedience; for it appears that they were not strictly bound to observe the rules which their ancestor had laid down for them, inasmuch as no man can pretend to bind his posterity to any one particular manner of living; yet still, from respect to his memory and to the example of their own immediate parents, the descendants of that Jehonadab, the son of Rechab,

who lived in the reign of Jehu, continued to practise his commands nearly three hundred years afterwards, in the reign of Jehoiakim. Nor is it to the purpose to decide whether Jehonadab's commands were in themselves wise or no; or whether, in a similar case, if such an one could be found, a man's descendants in our days would do right in keeping his regulations. The story is not applicable, nor meant to be applied, as a particular rule, but as a general one; and as such, it declares that the habit of obedience, of giving up our own will to the will of others, even when there is no absolute duty requiring us to do so, is most pleasing in the sight of God, and in close conformity to the mind of Christ.

On the other hand, the story of Jehoiakim's burning the roll represents the extreme of disobedience. The roll which Baruch wrote from the mouth of Jeremiah contained, in the first place, commands very different in themselves from those delivered by Jehonadab to the Rechabites. It did not contain commands about things, in their own nature, indifferent, such as drinking no wine, and living in tents; it was a charge to fulfil the simple and universal duty of turning from evil and following good. It matters not from whom we receive such a charge as this; whether it come from the wisest man alive, or the most foolish; whether it be delivered with every circumstance of

outward authority, or found scattered by the way side. The charge to remember our duty is one which our conscience bids us immediately obey, without any regard whatever to the worthiness of the person from whom we receive it. But, in the next place, the roll which Jehoiakim burnt not only contained commands very different in their own nature from those of Jehonadab to the Rechabites, but commands recommended also by a very different authority. They were not the directions of a man to his remote posterity, who may be born centuries after he is dead; of whose condition he can know nothing, and to whom he cannot in right pretend to prescribe his laws; but they were the commands of the everlasting God, to whom all things past and to come are for ever present; his commands to the creatures whom he had made, to the people whom he had chosen, spoken by the mouth of his acknowledged prophet. Yet again, God's commands, we know, are too often disobeyed; but in the case of Jehoiakim, they were disobeyed avowedly, and with scorn. It was not the language of him who said, I will, though he afterwards went not; not the language of ordinary sin, breaking its own resolutions, yet condemning itself the while; but of sin with a high hand, sin open and blasphemous, which takes its part declaredly with the enemies of God, and stakes its all upon the issue.

Now, between these two cases, thus brought into contrast with one another almost within the same page, the conduct of the great mass of mankind is always hovering. Few equal the extreme of obedience set forth on the one hand, as few the extreme of disobedience set forth on the other. Thousands who disobey the Bible every day would shrink from the thought of burning it in utter defiance. Thousands who will do what they see to be just and reasonable will make no scruple of breaking a command which seems to them, in its own nature, indifferent. There is little need to speak against open blasphemy here, nor is it to the purpose to hold up literally the example of the Rechabites' obedience; but it will be to the purpose to show how much we are wanting in the principle of obedience, and how we thus come to insult God almost as really, though not so openly, as Jehoiakim when he burnt the roll.

That we are almost all of us, old and young, wanting in the principle of obedience, might be concluded pretty surely from the simple fact, that we do not like the very word. The word "independence," which is the opposite to obedience, is, on the contrary, a great favourite with us; we consider that it is at once delightful and honourable. Tracing this up to its origin, it is certainly, in part, nothing but evil; for it is made up largely of pride, and pride is ignorance of God. But as

few feelings are unmixed evil, so this, also, has been strengthened by being in part made up of good. So much of power has been exercised for evil, so much of obedience has been rendered from base fear or base hope of gain, that independence has been commended to us by its wearing the semblance of a noble courage, which would not, from selfish motives, submit to a disgraceful yoke. And because those who have suffered under oppressive power have been many, and they have been generally conscious that their own obedience proceeded not from principle, but from fear, they have admired the man who showed that he was without this fear, and from whose exertions they have all been benefited.

What is called, then, the feeling of independence is admired chiefly because it shows the absence of fear. But if obedience were rendered not from fear, but from principle, it would then be nobler, because it would imply greater self-denial, than the feeling of independence: for the feeling of independence is, in other words, a wish to have our own way, a wish in which there is nothing at all noble or admirable, except in as far as it is exercised in the face of the fear of danger. Set aside the existence of fear, and independence becomes no better than self-will; while obedience becomes self-denial for the sake of others, that is benevolence or charity.

This, I think, is quite true as to what is called independence, which, in itself, I have never seen praised, nor do I understand how it can be praised, except on false and unchristian grounds. For when it is called a proper sense of the dignity of man's nature, and an assertion of his natural freedom, the complacence with which such language is listened to only shows how little our habitual principles of judgment are really influenced by Christianity. What the dignity of man's nature is, except as compared with the beasts, or as when renewed by the Spirit of God, I cannot understand, if we attach any meaning to the words sin and corruption. Or what can be the natural freedom of a being who was created by the will of another, and who, by the very necessity of his existence, must for ever remain subject either as a loving child or a rebellious slave. I said, therefore, that pride was ignorance of God; for it can only be well founded on the supposition that we made ourselves, or that we are the most exalted order of beings in the universe, instead of being, so far as we know, the only order of beings which, by its own evil acts, is corrupted and degraded.

Obedience, if we set aside base fear or base hope of gain, is no other than self-denial, reverence, and benevolence. And this, not only or principally when the thing commanded is in itself our duty; for then it may be done for its own

sake, and not for the sake of the command; but when the thing commanded is indifferent, or when it is inconvenient to ourselves, but by no means involves any thing wrong in its compliance. For I need not say that obedience to a wicked command is at once disobedience to God, just as disobedience to a wicked command is obedience to God. The question is not, therefore, about commands of this sort, but about commands either altogether indifferent, or inconvenient to us to obey; not wicked or blamable; that is, the very sort of commands which are most commonly disobeyed, for commands to do what is wrong are, as we know, but seldom given.

Command implies a superiority; and therefore obedience, correctly speaking, is shown from an inferior towards a superior; from private persons to the laws, and to persons in public authority; from children to their parents, and so in the case of other similar relations; and in all these cases you may satisfy yourselves very easily, that where obedience is not shown from fear or interest, it is actually very much nobler than disobedience, and that the only thing which could have ever given to disobedience any just appearance of dignity is, because obedience has been so often paid from unworthy motives.

Undoubtedly I have been intending all this to apply to your present situation here. If indeed I

had seen amongst you any thing like a spirit of disobedience, if the relations between you and us were full of disorder and unkindness, I should have found it much more difficult, much more disagreeable, to speak on such a subject, though it might have been in one sense more needed. It would have been more disagreeable, for nothing can be more painful than to wear the slightest appearance of perverting this place into an engine of enforcing discipline for our own convenience; but as things are, I have no hesitation at all in speaking on the point. I say, without any scruple, that this is a place where the habit of true, of noble obedience, may and ought to be cultivated: of obedience, not from any unworthy fear or hope, but upon principle. In fact, every one knows that at schools all the unworthy motives are in favour of disobedience; take away any sense of principle or of affection, and as a mere matter of present loss and gain, obedience, on many occasions, holds out far less temptation than disobedience. I say it, as a matter of most certain truth, that if you suppose any boy perfectly indifferent to duty or affection, supposing that there is nothing in him but selfishness to work upon, and the favour or displeasure of his masters cannot affect his comfort nearly so much as the liking or disliking of his companions; and you know well that their liking or disliking are not always directed as they

ought to be. I am not sorry to confess that our rewards and punishments all suppose something good in yourselves to work upon; and this it is which makes the difference between education and civil government, between the discipline of a school and that of a workhouse or a gaol. Government by fear alone or chiefly is happily impossible with us, because here the object is your improvement, not your outward obedience only; and fear can but enforce the latter, not the former. But whilst obedience from unworthy motives is thus set out of the question, obedience for conscience sake may often be practised here; and the habit gained, than which none is more needed, nor any more ennobling, of cheerful submission to lawful authority. Obedience may often be practised, obedience I mean in things indifferent, or of which you do not see the importance; for I do not call it properly obedience when we only do what our conscience would have equally bound us to without any command at all. But in all societies there are some things laid down for the sake of general order or propriety, which in themselves, before they were fixed, can scarcely be said to have any thing to do with right or wrong. It is obedience when these rules are obeyed for conscience sake, obeyed because they are rules, and rules imposed by an authority which has a lawful claim on our compliance; and the good of so obey-

ing in the formation of the character is not inconsiderable. Not indeed if manhood were really, as some falsely talk, a state of independence; if the moment of your leaving school would be the last in which you would have any thing to do with obedience. But he who so looks on life is little likely to make it the beginning of life eternal. I do not speak only of those professions or situations in which obedience, in the most common sense of the word, is so strictly required; nor yet of the respect which our parents must claim so long as they are spared to us. But I speak of the habit of giving way to others, of not pressing our own will against theirs; that Christian habit which St. Peter calls "being subject one to another;" and I speak still more of the habit of obedience to God and Christ, as distinct from what we mean by the words virtue and duty. There can indeed be no obedience to God without these, but the word implies something more, it implies doing our duty because God commands it, it implies a deep and abiding sense of our relation to him, that we are not, nor ever can be independent beings, but dependent creatures; and that, by practising obedience to our Maker, by doing his will because it is his will, and because we love him, we shall be raised to a higher and more endearing name; no longer creatures, but children.

On the other hand, the habit of disobedience

may be learnt here no less readily. To hate authority, to evade it whenever you can, and to make a boast of doing so,—there are many opportunities, there is the temptation of much vulgar applause, to lead you to this; and with the feeling of independence thus full grown, as it were, in early youth, are these the times, or is this the country in which it will be diminished in manhood? Will it not be strengthened into all that selfish indifference to law and to authority of every kind which is now so common? And will he, who despises man, indeed reverence God? Or will he not, does he not, as a matter of experience, find Christ's yoke hard also? and does he not strive to free himself from it at every turn? How far is he then removed from the hardness of Jehoiakim? And does he not as truly hate and defy God's word in his heart and life, as if he were to utter his blasphemies aloud, and revile the Scriptures, or mock at Christ's worship and ordinances?

SERMON XXVI.

JUDICIAL BLINDNESS.

1 Samuel, ii. 25.

They hearkened not unto the voice of their father, because the Lord would slay them.

Ezekiel, xviii. 31, 32.

Why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye.

Let no one for an instant suppose that I have chosen these verses for my text with any intention of plunging into questions perfectly beyond the reach of man's understanding, and therefore perfectly incapable of affording us any benefit. The question which properly belongs to these verses, which I have purposely placed side by side of each other, is merely this, What is the lesson that

they were intended to teach us? What is the lesson? not, What is the truth which may be drawn from them as a conclusion from its premises? Again, is the lesson of these two verses intended for the same persons, or for the same person at the same time? or if for different persons, or for the same person at different times, what are the differences either of persons or of circumstances? And no man asking such questions as these of the Scripture is likely to ask in vain; whereas no man who asks what is the general truth, as in philosophy, which is to be gathered from these, and almost all other passages relating to God, is likely to be satisfactorily answered.

Now, first, what is the lesson taught us by the words out of the book of Samuel? "They hearkened not unto the voice of their father, because the Lord would slay them."

"The Lord would slay them!" it is a dreadful sentence, and we would fain know of whom it was uttered. It is spoken, we see, of some particular persons, not generally; and who were these persons? The account shows us that they were the sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, two men of great and instructive wickedness, the sons of a priest, brought up amidst holy things from their childhood, and themselves, when they grew up, called to minister in the priestly office. What more could have been done unto the vineyard?

What greater means of knowledge, what better opportunities of being impressed with a sense of God's majesty and holiness, could possibly have been granted them? But these means and opportunities had been neglected, till what was food at first was now their poison. They had gained such a habit of seeing and hearing holy things unmoved, that nothing could possibly work on them. It is probable that every fresh service which they performed about the tabernacle did but harden them more and more. How, then, could they hearken to the voice of their father, a kind old man, indeed, and a good one, but one with none of that vigour of character which commands respect, even from the evil. Were his words of gentle rebuke likely to move those hearts which for years had served every day in the presence of God, and had felt neither fear for him nor love of him. Vain was it to hope that such hearts should be so renewed to repentance. The seal of destruction was set on them but too plainly; the Lord would slay them; the laws of his providence, his unchanged and unchangeable providence, had decreed that their case was hopeless: for they had hardened their hearts greedily all their lives, and their work was now set so sure, that they could not undo it, because they could not wish it to be undone.

This, then, is the lesson, and a very solemn one

it is, and most useful. There were some on whom advice was wasted, for the law of God's providence was, that they must perish; that they had neglected such great means of grace so long and so obstinately, as to have hardened their hearts beyond repentance. There were some whose state was thus utterly lost; and perhaps He whose eye can read the heart of man may see, when looking over the souls now alive in this land, that there are some amongst them who are lost beyond repentance, like the sons of Eli. He whose eye can read the heart may perhaps find some such; but no other eye, save his alone, can tell them. And as we are sure that if there be any in such a state, they must, at any rate, be few, so we may be sure, also, that there is no man alive to whom the words of the text would always apply. There was a time, even with Hophni and Phinehas, there was a time with all the souls who may since have been equally lost, when God willed *not* to slay them; when his words to them were thus recorded by the prophet Ezekiel, "Why will ye die? Turn yourselves, and live ye!" So then the lesson of the text does not apply to the same persons at the same time, nor yet does it all belong to all persons; for there were some, as Hophni and Phinehas, and there may be some in God's sight now, who have nothing to do with the words of Ezekiel; there have been, and we may trust that there are, and ever

will be, many who have nothing to do with the words in Samuel. There have been, surely, those who, being continually led on from strength by the grace of God, have no need to dwell upon that fearful state, which is the last earthly portion of God's obstinate enemies. Nor, again, can it apply actually in any case to the same person at the same time; although,—part of it in the way of warning, and part of it in the way of active encouragement, —it may apply, and does, to almost all of us. God does speak to us now in the language of Ezekiel, that is our encouragement: he may, and will, if we are obstinately careless, speak to us hereafter in the language of Samuel; we shall not listen to the voice of God's word, because we shall have sinned beyond repentance.

Now if this be so, and if the words in Samuel, although not applying to us actually now, may apply to us hereafter, and probably will, if our lives are continued long without any improvement, but with a constant neglect of the means of grace;— if there be but a possibility to each of us of living on to such an utter death, may we not, should we not, seek anxiously what had been the early life, what the after circumstances, of those whom we are expressly told that they *had* lived on to it; that they hearkened not unto the voice of their father, because the Lord would slay them? Was their early life like ours? were the circumstances

of their after years such as may probably happen to us? We know that they were the sons of Eli, the high priest; and Eli, though a weak father, was yet himself a good man. It cannot be but that his sons must have seen and heard in him, from their early youth, much that should have led them to God. We know that they were brought up about the tabernacle. The sight, the sound of God's service, must have been ever familiar to them; they must have seen and heard of many who, like the father and mother of Samuel, came up before the Lord with the prayer of faith, or the thanksgiving of a grateful heart; the sacrifices must for ever have told them of sin and of uncleanness, and of the need of purifying it away. Are we any of us in circumstances like these? Many of us, we know, *are* almost to the letter. Many of those who hear me are the sons of ministers of Christ. They have seen and heard in their homes, from their earliest childhood, much that should have led them to God. They have been born and brought up close by the house of God, where the sight of its tower, the sound of its bells, have mingled with their earliest recollections; where they have seen, Sunday after Sunday, God's people coming to offer up their prayers and praises, and have heard those prayers uttered by lips which to their ears should have even more endeared them. But again, for those whose birth has not

been such, yet now, and as we look forward a little to coming years, is there nothing of the circumstances of Hophni and Phinehas in theirs? Let them be assured that now, even at this place, with all its temptations, with all the imperfections of our ministrations towards them, they have had greater means of grace than were ever the portion of Hophni and Phinehas; that when they have turned away in indifference from Christ's holy table, they have despised more than the tabernacle in Shiloh. Or go on a few years further, when they go, as so many are going, from this place to the universities, will they not there lead a life with the advantages of the sons of Eli? There, as before the tabernacle, the daily sacrifice of prayer is duly offered. It is not, as here and elsewhere, that the house of God is opened only weekly; but every day, at morning and evening, the public service of God acknowledges that from him all our works proceed, and to his glory should all return. Now, if we treat these advantages as Eli's sons treated them; if we despise our daily bread of life, because it is daily offered; if we make that, as doubtless Eli's sons did make it, that which should have been a quickening spirit, a cold and hardening form; if, because our bodies have been more often in the courts of God, our spirits are there the less; may we not, must we

not expect, that having turned the means of grace into means of mischief, there shall be no further help vouchsafed or left to us? that we shall hereafter, as years go on, fall into the last and worst condition of Hophni and Phinehas, and be unable to hearken unto the words of God, because God will slay us?

Nor will it avail to complain that we should not have been so fatally hardened, had the means of good been more sparingly given us; that we should have loved the service of the tabernacle more, had we been less familiar with it. The same page of Scripture which tells us of the sons of Eli tells us of Samuel also; not born, indeed, but brought by his mother, at his earliest years, to be in that same place, and to draw grace and strength from those very ministrations which, to the sons of Eli, had been the savour of death unto death. Think we that the prayers, and vows, and sacrifices of the tabernacle service were less familiar to him than to them? If the daily offering were a weariness to them, why was it not so to him also? If God's so near presence did but harden their hearts, why did it strengthen and soften his? But with him, what was designed for his good bore its natural fruit; he had ministered before the Lord when a child, and it fitted him the better to minister when a man. It is for us to choose whether we

will be as Samuel or as Hophni and Phinehas; whether we will gain the habit of profiting by holy things, or of despising them.

But their parents were so different; in Samuel's case so zealous, in that of the sons of Eli so neglectful. Suppose, for a moment, that it was so; and though it is not becoming in a child to lay his faults upon the neglect of his parents, yet, as we know that some parents are negligent, and that some children will avail themselves of this excuse, let us consider the judgment passed on Hophni and Phinehas. Doubtless Eli was heavily punished, but were they, therefore, excused? Or was it not with them, as God declares it should be with the wicked among his people whom the watchman had not warned, that they died in their iniquity, although their blood was required at the watchman's hand? For though they who should more particularly warn us hold their peace, yet God never leaves himself without witness; his warnings are scattered on every side, and we cannot escape them; however much we may be neglected by our parents or teachers, we cannot pretend that we have not heard the call of God, both in his dispensations of providence and of grace.

Yet, certainly, though Eli's fault did not save Hophni and Phinehas from guilt; from guilt, too, the most hopeless, so that while yet alive in the

body, they were dead in the spirit; yet this state would have come on them sooner, had they despised the watchful zeal of such parents as the mother of Samuel. And again, on the other side, that zeal was, in Samuel's case, no doubt blessed to his greater safety. He was enabled to keep more constantly to the love of God, because he had such a mother. Here is a great lesson and encouragement to us all, who, having children placed where they will constantly hear of God and attend his service, may so influence them as to make these opportunities be to them what they ought to be; the savour of life unto life. Here is a great reason why domestic care should go along with that which is more public; since it may depend on the greatness or deficiency of this domestic care whether the public opportunities turn to good or to evil: a great reason for those who have the blessing of such care to thank God for it with all their hearts, and most earnestly to give heed to it; knowing, that if they perish when thus doubly guarded, there can be none whose guilt will be so great as theirs: a great reason, also, for those who have it not, why they should labour to supply it from other sources; why they should avail themselves more diligently of those public means of grace, which, if used as they may be, will prove to them, that when their father and mother forsake them, the Lord has taken them

up; which, if not used, (and it may happen, that having no parents to warn them, they let slip the opportunities offered,) will then prove a curse unto them, and not a blessing.

Who can tell which of all these is, or will be, the case with each of us? One thing, however, we can tell each for ourselves; whether we are availing ourselves of those means of grace which we have, public, certainly, if not public and private both. One thing, we can tell, whether the words which we have now heard have passed by unregarded or no; whether, as they are now going to close, we think that our task is over; and that if we have attended to them whilst they have been spoken, we have shown a sufficient zeal for our souls' salvation. So to-morrow we may turn every one to his own ways as usual; the carelessness, the vice, the hardness of heart increasing, and to increase more and more. So, perhaps, did the sons of Eli, till the sound of the name of God, and the sight of his tabernacle, passed over their senses without leaving the least impression on their minds. So they grew harder and harder, till the most earnest remonstrances, even from a father's lips, were unable, in any degree, to awaken them; their sin had wrought its perfect work, and brought forth death: "they hearkened not unto the voice of their father, because the Lord would slay them."

SERMON XXVII.

CHRISTIAN FRIENDSHIP.

COLOSSIANS, iv. 11.

These only are my fellow-workers unto the kingdom of God, who have been a comfort unto me.

THE persons of whom this is said were three. One was Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, who had travelled over Asia Minor with Paul; had been with him at Ephesus; had gone up with him to Jerusalem; and had been sent with him from Palestine to Rome, where he was now his fellow-prisoner. Another was Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, the very man who had formerly been the cause of the contention between Paul and Barnabas, when Paul, thinking him deficient in zeal, had refused to take him with him as his companion on his journeys. Now, however, Paul gives him a very different character, calling him, as we have heard, one of the few who were a

comfort to him, and who were his fellow-workers unto the kingdom of God. The third was Jesus, who was called Justus, that is, whose Jewish name was Jesus, but who was known among the Greeks by the name of Justus; just as the Apostle himself was called by the Roman name Paul, when he was living amongst the Gentiles, although his own proper name was Saul. Of this Jesus, or Justus, nothing is known, unless he was the person spoken of in the eighteenth chapter of the Acts, as receiving Paul into his house at Corinth. But these three men, Aristarchus, Marcus, and Jesus or Justus, were, at this time, Paul's only cordial fellow-workers to the kingdom of God, and his only comforts in his imprisonment.

The Epistle to the Colossians was written from Rome, and it is not in this Epistle only that St. Paul speaks of himself as being very generally unsupported by his fellow-Christians during his captivity in that city. In his second Epistle to Timothy, written from Rome only a short time before his death, he says, "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me." Even Demas, who was with him when he wrote the Epistle to the Colossians, had been tempted away from him before he wrote the Epistle to Timothy; and, through love of this present world, had left him, and departed to Thessalonica. And even in the Epistle to the Philippians, although

he says that there were some who entirely sympathized with him, yet he also complains that "others preached Christ not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to his bonds:" that is, we may suppose, they taught that the true followers of Christ ought to keep the law of Moses, and that Paul was deservedly to be blamed for teaching the contrary; that therefore he was not suffering for the sake of Christ, but for his own errors; having justly provoked the hatred of the Jews against him, by attacking the law and the customs which God had given them. Thus, from one cause or another; from want of zeal in some, and from a superstitious zeal in others; Paul found that after all his labours, they who were turned away from him were many more than they who heartily laboured with him, and were a comfort to him.

There is much in this part of the Apostle's life which, as it seems to me, may be useful to us. In what is said of Marcus in this passage, compared with what we read of him in the Acts of the Apostles, there is an example of individual character which, I believe, is far from uncommon. It is impossible to say with what feelings Marcus originally accompanied Barnabas and Paul, when they went from Antioch to Cyprus, to preach the word of God. It may have been merely to go with his relation Barnabas; or, as Barnabas, we are told, was himself a native of Cyprus, he may have

had other relations in the island, whom Marcus was glad to visit. For it appears that when they crossed over from Cyprus, to the main land of Asia, Marcus, instead of going on with them on their journey, returned directly to his own home at Jerusalem. He had not as yet embarked himself thoroughly in the service of God; but the very fact of his having once taken part in it, worked its fruit in him gradually. He was thrown with those who were deeply interested in the work:—his friends and relations were engaged in it; it was presented continually to his mind more and more, and so drew him more and more to devote himself to it. And this, I believe, is what often happens with those who enter at first into the Christian ministry, not certainly in hypocrisy, but without a full sense of the great charge which they are undertaking. They find, ere long, that necessity is laid upon them, that woe is unto them if they preach not the gospel. What they before had thought of generally, and at a distance, now opens upon them daily more and more. A minister, ordained under such circumstances, is called in to attend the sick: perhaps at first he goes as a matter of duty, or out of a feeling of kindness, but with little experience or understanding of what it is to guide and strengthen souls in their extremity. But the air which he breathes is holy; he learns himself, in these first visits, more

than he teaches others; he finds that what he is engaged in must be a savour of life unto life, or a savour of death unto death. It is no small thing on which he has engaged himself. True it is, that if there was hypocrisy in his purpose when he entered the ministry; if the work was not at all in his thoughts, but the hire, or the comforts of the situation were every thing; then, indeed, he has played a dangerous game, and the forfeit paid is fearful. It does then happen not unfrequently that he cannot engage in the more private and personal parts of his ministry; he cannot visit the sick, or comfort the weak-hearted, or counsel the ignorant, for these are things which he has not learnt, and, what is worse, which he now dares not learn. He is apt then to confine himself merely to his public duties; and there, no doubt, it is not good for him, but most fatal, to be obliged weekly to speak with his mouth the words of eternal life, while his heart is closed against them. He thus is continually hardening himself against the impressions which alone can save him. But in the other case, which, thank God, is, I believe, far the more common, where the fault was more want of thought than double-mindedness, the having to perform the highest duties makes a man in the end perform them in the truest spirit; what was at first kindness, or a sense of professional obligation, becomes, ere long, the

constraining love of Christ; he is himself converted, and then is able and most willing to strengthen his brethren. And every man who is arrived at middle age, can point out instances in which many of those whom he knew in youth as gay and thoughtless, have been not only sobered and steadied, but wrought to a high pitch of Christian excellence, by having entered upon the ministry; they become, like Marcus, true fellow-workers to the kingdom of God. But I believe experience can furnish hardly any such instances in the case of those whose early life was absolutely profligate; whose practice was bad, and whose principles, at the same time, were low and hard. Where such is the case, then their entrance upon the ministry becomes at once a curse to those committed to their care, and, in a far more deadly measure, to themselves.

Again, there is something very instructive in the little true sympathy which the Apostle could feel with most of those who surrounded him at Rome. The Christians there were undoubtedly numerous; St. Paul had himself some years before written to them that epistle which stands at the head of all his epistles, and which is one of the most invaluable of them all. But they seemed mostly to have belonged to the church of the circumcision; that church, of which Peter afterwards, when he came to Rome, became the head; to the church

of those who were Jews, either by birth or by adoption, who united with the belief of Christ, the practice of the ceremonies of the Jewish law. It was true that what they had in common with St. Paul, supposing them to be sincere, was of much more importance than that in which they differed; if they received Jesus as their Saviour, and had partaken of his spirit, and were become heirs through him of eternal life, it was a very little matter whether a man did or did not eat such and such kinds of meat, or think it right to perform such and such outward ceremonies. But it is the very essence of bigotry to insist upon agreement in trifles, and where this does not exist, to care little for agreement in spirit, and in the weightier matters of judgment, mercy, and truth. The Roman Christians looked upon Paul with suspicion, because he had preached boldly that circumcision availed nothing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature; because he had told them that he who regarded one day above another, and he who regarded every day alike, might both be equally the true servants of Christ; that he who scrupled to eat all things freely had no right to condemn his neighbour, because he, in the fulness of his Christian faith, had a more enlarged notion of his Christian liberty. These were offences in St. Paul which all his labours and all his sufferings for Christ's sake, all his deep and clear

perception of the great scheme of Christian truth, all his holy and self-denying life, could not, in their eyes, atone for. They turned away from him, therefore, as one who was not of their number; and that blessed Apostle, whose name is now loved and reverenced from one end of the Church of Christ to the other, was treated by his fellow-Christians at Rome as no better than a latitudinarian and a heretic.

There are not wanting, in our days, those who too much resemble these Roman Christians; men who, in the true spirit of narrow-mindedness, are for ever, in their choice of those with whom they will unite, straining at the gnat and swallowing the camel. But the desertion which St. Paul experienced is capable also of being considered in another point of view, and one which more directly concerns us here. We need not now look to the particular reasons which made him to be left thus alone; but merely take the fact, that one of the most faithful of God's servants could find, even amongst those who owned in name the same Master, so few to be true fellow-workers with him. A greater than Paul had indeed suffered the same thing before him: even his own chosen disciples were scattered in the hour of danger, every man to his own, and left Christ alone; and yet he was not alone, because the Father was with him. He knew, indeed, that our nature yearns

after this sympathy, and therefore he sent out his seventy disciples, not singly, but two and two together. Yet his own example, and that of his faithful Apostle, teach us that we must not set our hearts too fondly even upon this greatest of earthly blessings; we must be prepared for that most grievous of all trials, when none but God and our own hearts will bear witness on our behalf. And if even this be not beyond expectation, much more is it to be looked for, nay, it were folly not to look for it, that they who do sympathize with us heartily, will be at any rate but few only: we may think ourselves well off, if we can find as many as Paul did, as many as two or three who are genuine fellow-workers with us, and whose hearts are as our own. We may be quite sure, that where two or three only are gathered together in Christ's name, there is Christ in the midst of them. And perhaps it may be a useful trial to most of us, to teach us thus not to lean upon the help of man, not to follow Christ only when others set us the example, but to serve him, if need be, alone. How clear a proof is it of our weakness, if because some human friend is taken from us, whose counsel and whose support helped us forward in the service of Christ, we must now stand still or go backwards. Was it his influence only that encouraged us? was it his example that served us for a pattern? was it his countenance

that made us not fear nor care for the rebukes or the opposition of the majority? If he were all this to you, thank God for his goodness in having given you such a friend; but do not shame all that he has done for you by showing that it has taken no root in your own hearts; that you were safe only while he was by. Much more, do not so wrong the power and the love of Christ as not to know that he is more than the dearest earthly friend; that his influence, his example, his praise, are far more than those of man, and can never be taken away from you. And consider whether, if you have yourselves derived so much help from those who were before you in Christ Jesus, there may not be others who would fain derive the same help from you: whether there may not be some who are now, what you were a little while ago, just in suspense between good and evil; with serious thoughts awakened in them, but not matured; with a desire to do good, but with too little strength and steadiness of character, if left to themselves, to carry their desire into practice. Here, then, is a way opened before you, in which you can most fitly show your gratitude to those earthly friends to whom you owe so much, and to your Lord and Saviour, from whose loving care they, and every other good thing which you receive, are alike ministered to you. Let your influence and example be to those who are younger than you

what your friends' influence and example were once to yourselves; that so the succession of God's servants may never be broken off, but continue, and if it may be, with a larger increase, from generation to generation.

I think that, in all probability, some who hear me have understood to what and to whom this is particularly applicable. It will be, and I know not that we ought always to try to avoid it, that particular circumstances will be before our minds even when our language is general; and if it were not so, our pictures could hardly escape being vague and unlike any reality. But if in speaking of those who have left us, the particular allusion could not be mistaken, yet what I have said of those who are left behind, is, I hope and believe, equally applicable to many. I should be very sorry to think that there were only one or two individuals amongst us who were desirous to serve Christ heartily. But yet we find that differences of taste and even circumstances that may seem purely accidental, do hinder even good men from having entire sympathy with each other; so that although there may be many engaged really in the same service, yet few only may be able to enjoy fully the sense and consciousness of their union. This indeed is a great evil, and one of the most humiliating things connected with humanity; that Christ's servants should not all acknowledge and

feel their brotherhood. Even the very apostles did not; for Paul and Barnabas had so hot a contention together that they parted from each other, and went on their work each alone. But how blessed to them will be that hour, when they who, from the infirmity of their human passions, could not here work together, will rest together for evermore in perfect union, with that Lord whom they both loved!

SERMON XXVIII.

CHRISTIAN PATIENCE.

GALATIANS, vi. 9.

Let us not be weary in well doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not.

IT would be a long and not an uninteresting inquiry, to trace out the various ways in which the feeling of impatience shows itself in the human mind. By impatience, I do not mean hastiness of temper, but the sense of the imperfections of our condition, whether in body, mind, or spirit; and a restless desire to see them removed. Where St. Paul says that "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now," he means to express the universal extent of this feeling, this consciousness of the inevitable want of rest so long as we are here on earth. Its development, of course, as of all the simple feelings of the mind, has been infinitely complicated,

and has led to actions apparently the most opposite to one another; for it has sometimes urged men to suicide, and at other times it has driven them to endure a long life of self-inflicted pains and deprivations. So, again, in the understanding; it has led, in some instances, to the wildest scepticism; in others, to the most blind superstition. Different tempers seek different means of relief, but almost all feel the same grievance; they desire rest and satisfaction to their minds, and they do not find it.

This lot of all mankind falls to Christians as well as other men. "Even we," says St. Paul, "who have received the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." There remaineth a rest for the people of God, but they are not yet entered into it. And in them the feeling of longing for that rest, if watched and hindered from enfeebling their practice, is in itself not blamable. Our Lord himself expressed it so far as it may be lawfully entertained, when he said, "O faithless and perverse generation! how long shall I be with you, how long shall I suffer you?" But he showed also that he did not allow it to influence him in its evil excess, for his very next words were a preparation for an act of charity; "Bring thy son hither to me. And he rebuked the unclean spirit, and

healed the child, and restored him again to his father."

The feeling, then, which I speak of, being so general, and showing itself in such various ways, it would be impossible, even if it were likely to be useful, to go fully, on the present occasion, into all its branches. But the words of the text supply us with one very common instance, when they tell us "not to be weary in well-doing." For as we feel and show impatience in many other ways, so we do in this; we tire sometimes of our duty, because it does not bring with it all the fruit which we expect; or, because we seem not to make sufficient progress in it. And thus, after having gone on well for a time, and when some of the greatest difficulties of doing so had been overcome, we suddenly fall off, and leave ourselves with all our work to begin again, if, indeed, we are ever again disposed to begin it.

And this, our becoming weary of well-doing, arises also from different causes in different persons. First, it may arise from this, that our motive for well doing was not strong enough. People often begin to mend their ways from motives, good, perhaps, so far as they go, but by no means going far enough. A drunkard, or intemperate person, may leave off his bad habits for the sake of his health; an indolent man may be roused to exertion by the necessities of his family; or, to

take our own case, a boy may resolve to exert himself more than he has done, from a lively impression of what his friends may have said to him at home, and of the annoyance which his conduct had caused them. The motives here spoken of, are far from blamable; and, certainly, they are far from powerless. They often lead to a marked change in a person's habits, and this change is often lasting. But it is also very often not lasting, because, from time or circumstances, the power of the motive is weakened before it has completely done its work. The intemperate person, if he finds his health visibly improved, is apt sometimes to think that he can now afford to indulge himself with safety; the indolent person, in the same way, if fortune seems to favour him, may think that he may now relax a little, and enjoy the fruits of his labour. And here the impression of what was said or felt by a boy's friends when he was at home, becomes less lively by the mere lapse of time; he cannot so fully bring before his mind the displeasure or distress which their language and manner had manifested; their letters do not, perhaps, dwell on it, but express, as is natural, satisfaction at the present improvement in him, rather than regret for what is past. Then when the temptation to relax his efforts comes on him, he will flatter himself that he has done enough to please his parents, that they had not

been so very deeply annoyed by his former neglect, and that now it is clear, from their own showing, that they are pleased and satisfied. So the spring is loosened, and he flies back again to his old habits; and, perhaps, if the time is long enough, he goes home at the end of the half-year with the fruit of all his short-lived improvement gone, and with a less chance remaining of his endeavouring with success to improve again.

But a weariness in well-doing proceeds oftener perhaps from another cause, which may more properly be called impatience; from disappointment at not reaping so soon as we expected the fruit of our labours. This will be understood at once, if I speak of well doing in your common work; that is, in improving your understandings. I have said on former occasions, that the fruit in this particular sort of labour, was late in showing itself; it would not be fully valued till you arrived at manhood. It must be, I suppose, that where there does not exist the very highest intellectual power, that is, in the very great majority of cases, a boy must work without a clear perception of the good which he is getting, in any degree proportioned to the labour. It does often happen, therefore, when the stronger stimulants of prizes, and other like encouragements, are withheld, that the weariness of well doing comes upon him; he is tired of labouring without reaping, as it seems to him, any ade-

quate benefit. And this is a very hard case to deal with, because the full benefit to be derived, must be a matter of faith; it is impossible very often to do more than give an assurance that it will come at last. So with strong present temptation to oppose to a prospect of future good, it often happens that we consider what will only come by and by, to be no better than what will never come at all; and give up a pursuit in despair, of which the object appears so distant.

Suppose, however, that the well-doing in which we are labouring, is that which best deserves the name; that we are really trying to grow in goodness and holiness, in the fear and love of God. Why should we grow weary here, when we knew at the very beginning, that the fruit was distant, that death must be passed before our rest should be opened to us? We do know this, but yet we lay our account besides with a speedier return to our labours, either on worldly grounds, or on spiritual. We look for it on worldly grounds, because we have been told that good conduct is sure to win respect; that virtue, even here, rarely goes unrewarded. And this is true, yet when stated thus simply, it is misleading. Good conduct will win respect in the long run, and under ordinary circumstances; not immediately, nor always. Not immediately, because it is not soon acknowledged to be sincere and consistent; not always,

because it may happen to encounter prejudices of party, or others of a similar kind, which would be, and which have been actually proof against a virtue absolutely perfect and divine. No doubt, one who is believed to fear God is generally respected; respected even by those who do not like him; but the respect felt for his piety, depends upon the belief entertained of his sincerity and consistency. Suppose a person really sincere, yet not therefore perfect; and suppose him betrayed, according to the bias of his natural temper, into some act either of violence or weakness. He then loses his hold on the opinions of his neighbours; some call him a hypocrite, others scrupling to do this, yet condemn his inconsistency, and profess to lament that persons, professing to fear God, should act with so little regard to his commandments. But suppose that by perseverance in well-doing, he succeeds in establishing his character with indifferent persons, and in ordinary times. Yet if, from any circumstances, he should oppose any prevailing opinion or habit of the day, it is well if the fruits of a life's labour, so far as earth is concerned, are not presently sacrificed; if he be not reviled instead of respected, and every word and action of his life misrepresented and condemned. Let any one read the circumstances of the deaths of some of the martyrs who were sacrificed in the religious persecutions of the fifteenth and six-

teenth centuries. Take particularly the deaths of John Huss, and Jerome of Prague, who, falling earlier in the cause than our own English martyrs. were supported in their last agonies by a far smaller number of hearts to sympathize with them. Consider these two men, whose professions, well borne out by their lives, had shown them to be true followers of Christ; remember how they were reviled as outcasts from Christ, and enemies; how, while their flesh was burning, they were forbidden to have any comfort in death, but were openly told that these earthly and passing flames would be exchanged for the fire unquenchable. And by whom were they thus denied all part in their crucified and risen Lord? Not by open profligates and blasphemers, but by the according voice of the ministers of Christ's visible church, assembled in their general council at Constance; by those who were daily preaching Christ, and of some of whom, no less than of the very sufferers themselves, it might be said that they preached him in sincerity. Yet could one servant of Christ insult, torture, kill in body, and doom to the everlasting destruction of his soul, another servant of Christ, whose love to their common Lord was no less than his own! So it is; and who shall trust that his bitterest foes will not be amongst the number of his Lord's most faithful servants, if the accursed spirit of party be enkindled, and the weightier matters of

the law be forgotten, for some paltry difference about the mint, and anise, and cummin.

But even on spiritual grounds we are sometimes apt to expect the fruit of our serving God too early. We expect too soon to enjoy an unwavering faith, mortified affections, the love and the peace of God triumphant within us. We think it so shocking that we should sin, after having been once enlightened by the heavenly gift, that we are either dispirited, and fall back in despair, or else take the horrible step of persuading ourselves that sin is not sin, because they who cannot sin have committed it. Rather should we prepare ourselves for an incessant struggle; for seasons and foretastes of God's peace, indeed, the earnest of that which is to come; but not for peace unbroken, nor for temptations wholly subdued. Well-doing will still at times at least be so much of an effort that there may be danger of our growing weary in it. Enough of the wilderness will still remain to make it dangerous to resign ourselves to enjoyment, as though we were already gone over Jordan.

Be not therefore weary in well-doing; be not wearied because the fruit of it is such as you cannot yet fully value, nor because your progress is less rapid than you had expected, nor because you do not meet with the respect and support of other men, even of good men, so much as you

might have thought probable; nor even because, in your own inmost souls, the present sweets of God's service may often be but faintly tasted, while its difficulties yet remain to be struggled with. Remember that although Christ rose again for us, to show that we should rise also, yet it is so fixed that we must die before we can rise, that he himself became subject to death also. As death still remains to us, so also does, and will remain, some of that evil which first brought death into the world. We shall triumph, through the blood of Christ, over the one and the other; but till death be destroyed, sin will not utterly perish, nor Christ's church cease to be militant. Pray we that we may hold fast by him through all our struggles and difficulties, that we may never be weary of following Him, who, in this, as in other things, was a comforting example to his faithful servants, that his struggles with evil were not over till the very moment when he commended his spirit into the hands of his Heavenly Father.

SERMON XXIX.

CHRISTIAN THANKFULNESS.

2 Corinthians, iv. 1.

As we have received mercy, we faint not.

This is the true Christian's motto. As we have received mercy from God, we are encouraged to labour in his service from love and gratitude; God's mercy ever coming first, not to reward work done, but exciting us to work to come. And this is so in the great matter of our whole lives; we are forgiven freely, and then are called upon to live as those who are forgiven, as children whom God loves: and it is true also of many particular points and events in our lives, where God's mercies wholly undeserved are poured upon us, to quicken us to love him in return. We know this indeed, and have all heard it many times over, but the state of the world clearly shows that we do not

feel it; or in Scripture language, do not really believe it. It is impossible when we look at society, however hastily, to conceive of it as living in thankfulness to God, as having received great mercies at his hands, and as owing him its most grateful service in return. We cannot so conceive of society: and if we look to that which concerns us most nearly, if we look into our own hearts and lives, can we more easily conceive it of ourselves?

I cannot pretend to say any thing new on this matter, either to your consciences or to mine. I cannot speak of any mercies that we do not know of, and have not received, without going away from the question; and to speak of mercies that we have received must be only to say what we know already. So it is, and yet knowing it or not, it may be well to repeat it to ourselves again; for it is the truth; and if we do not receive it and love it now, it will notwithstanding condemn us hereafter.

"We have received mercy," it is true, of every human being; but how unusually true of us who are here assembled! How unusually true, how awfully true! For let us go to no greater distance than to the parish church of this very town, and let us repeat the words there, and though they are still very true, yet what a difference between their truth as spoken to that mixed congregation, and as spoken to us. Speak them there, and

though all certainly have experienced God's mercies, (I am speaking now of earthly mercies,) yet how many have experienced, and are experiencing, his chastenings also. How many are there, whose greatest earthly happiness is passed away, who have tasted life's utmost sweets, and to whom the remainder of their cup, as far as earth is concerned, is only not bitter! This comes inevitably with the course of years; for depend on it there are wounds which here cannot be fully repaired; there are losses, after which we know with the utmost certainty, that let life last as long as it will, its brightness will return no more. Nor is this the case only after actual losses, it happens by the mere passing away of time. There are those in every mixed congregation, who, if their happiness has never been cut short by any sudden stroke, must yet feel that it is ebbing; that although they may possess the same outward sources of enjoyment, they have no longer the same power to enjoy them. Can you conceive what it is, not only to look at your bodies and know that their strength and power of resisting disease is daily decaying, but to feel the sense of your minds diminishing also; the memory becoming less retentive, the imagination less lively; and that sovereign reason, which in your vigour had swayed so evenly over the various and powerful faculties of your nature, now gradually losing its control, and the balance

of its once well ordered reign disturbed by the impatience of some of its subject powers, and the weakness of others?

Again, go to the parish church in this town, and there preach on the text of God's mercies, and will there not be many who, while gratefully feeling that He is merciful, yet know it more from his inward dealings with their souls, than from what he has done to their outward condition? Will there not be many who, daily labouring, some perhaps, it is to be feared, labouring with more than healthful labour, yet return home in the evening to see their families in a state of hardship at least, if not of positive suffering? No, we do not know, not even those who have seen most of it, we do not fully know what it is to be in poverty. We do not know what it is to be wholly without the luxuries of life, to be in a degree without its comforts also; we do not know what it is, instead of having scarcely a wish ungratified, to have scarcely a wish which we are not obliged to restrain. Look to every outward enjoyment which we possess, from the commonest gratification to the highest; food, clothing, lodging, furniture, leisure, quiet, books, amusements, society; and then think how largely poverty deprives us of them all. I am afraid that there must be some among us so entirely dependent on these things, and yet so little thankful for them, that if they were to be

deprived of them by any sudden stroke of fortune, they would think life not worth the living for.

Yet once again, speak to a mixed congregation of God's mercies, and how many are there to whom there is denied one of the highest, the power of cultivating their minds, and increasing their knowledge! Want of time, want of early preparation, want of able and intelligent instructors or companions, want of books, and of mixing freely in the world, keeps down many a mind whose native powers, if favoured by circumstances, would have raised it to no mean proficiency. Least of all, perhaps, can you conceive what it is to have devoured eagerly every particle of knowledge which was ever put within your reach; to have an appetite for improvement which you cannot obtain; a consciousness of intellectual power which you cannot exercise. And yet there are some, probably an increasing number, though undoubtedly far fewer than those who feel the pressure of bodily want, who, living in the midst of the means of knowledge fully enjoyed by others, can themselves get but the merest pittance of it; who feel the burden of ignorance, yet neither know the way to shake it off, nor have the power to effect it if they did know.

But we are not in the parish church; we are not in a mixed congregation; and when here I repeat the words of the text, "We have received

mercy," did I not rightly say that their truth was even awful? No perfect ruin of happiness; no loss to cloud our whole being; no decay of body, none of mind; but the very first freshness and springing vigour of both: no poverty, nor any thing approaching to it; the enjoyments of wealth to most of us, even without its cares; no impossibility of gratifying all our wishes, but with indulgences and pleasures innumerable; no incapability of cultivating our minds, but with every opportunity of time and circumstances ministered to us most largely. And this, taking us as a congregation, is true to the letter. Surely we have received mercy; mercy unchequered and overwhelming; mercy, which, if it does not make us labour with an unfainting heart in God's service, has, indeed, fallen upon hearts harder than the hard way-side.

But it was a true word of the Christian poet, when he said, addressing himself to God, "Give what thou wilt, without thee we are poor." I have spoken of many mercies, I may say of all earthly mercies; and all these are richly given us. Yet still, undoubtedly, we might be poor, if we had not the one great mercy of all given us beside. And have we not received this mercy also? What Christian has not? Has not Christ died, yea, rather is risen again? Is he not at the right hand of God, and making intercession for us? What promise, what privilege, what knowledge of our

favoured state, what means of making this knowledge profitable, are denied to us? Surely this place itself, all that we hear here, and might join in, the prayers, the praises, the teaching of the Scriptures, above all, that communion with Christ himself to which we were this morning invited, all these declare most loudly, that in spiritual matters no less than in temporal, we have received abundant mercies; all these unite with all our worldly good things, in calling to us with one common voice, that we, like the Apostle, faint not.

They call to us that we faint not; that according to every mercy which we are receiving, we should labour to make a return of thankfulness. But what is it, if, for almost every one of these mercies, there are some of us constantly unthankful? What return do we make for that freshness of early life which as yet makes even earthly happiness possible at least to all of us; which preserves our power of enjoyment as yet unabated? Are there any who make no other return for this, but to enjoy greedily and thoughtlessly, shutting their eyes upon all that is to come? What return do we make for our so abounding in all worldly comforts, for having our wants, and even our pleasures, provided for with no thought or labour of ours? Can it be that any of us take these blessings with the utmost indifference, and bestow no thought on the thousands of their brethren who are without them?

Can it be that any of us hold no intercourse with the poor, but to insult or despise them; or to bribe them to be the tools of their own vices? What return do we make for our ample means of knowledge and intellectual improvement? Can it be that some of us make no account of these whatever; that time, and opportunities of every kind, are habitually wasted? Last of all: what return do we make for our spiritual blessings; for our Christian privileges; for all the means of grace here vouchsafed to us? Can it be that any come here only because they must, and sit here impatient to be gone? Can it be that when they are invited four times in a year to partake of Christ's communion, they turn away from it every time, and think that it is no concern of theirs?

Now, if there be any one amongst us, it matters not of what age, whose conscience tells him that, having received mercy in all these several ways, it has not excited him to show his sense of it in any; if he be at once thoughtless, and selfish, and idle, and godless, is it possible to conceive any one of God's living creatures whose guilt, when compared with what God has done to him, and for him, is greater than his? Undoubtedly there are many who commit far greater crimes; crimes, indeed, properly speaking, he may commit none; but the question is one not of crime, but of guilt; of real

vileness in the soul; of utter unfitness for heaven. Where can there be a human being whose life is viler, more utterly devoid of every thing grateful, good, and noble, than one in our rank of life, receiving good so largely, and feeling and doing nothing good in return? Surely we cannot but sympathize entirely with Christ's language to such as these: "Woe unto you that are rich, for you have received your consolation. Woe unto you that are full now, for you shall hunger. Woe unto you that laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep." It does seem most just, that a soul which had received good of every kind, and had wasted all in utter selfishness and ingratitude, should be for ever deprived of all good, and for ever feel that it was deprived.

"It does seem most just;" so the understanding says, unable to resist the force of God's truth; but even while the words are passing out of our mouths, we shrink at the sentence which they pronounce upon ourselves. For surely who are we that judge our brother? who are we, to fix upon others the guilt of all this ingratitude, as if we ourselves were thankful? No; let us judge ourselves, all of us; the word that I have spoken is indeed true, but it belongs to us all. They were thankless, certainly, in many instances we cannot but feel too sure that it was so, who turned away

this morning from Christ's communion. But were we thankful who staid behind? O if we were, if we felt that we had received mercy, then let us faint not; let us remember our infinite debt, —or, to speak more truly, for it is not a debt, —let us remember the infinite love which our heavenly Father has shown us, to excite us to love him in return. It is not a debt; if it were, how could we ever pay it? Our debts have been paid already to the full; God has himself paid them, by giving his only Son to die for us. It is not a debt, but it is God's free love to us, who giveth liberally to all men, and upbraideth not; but it is free and infinite love, which, not to feel and to return, is vileness. O labour we then in our several callings; labour we, and faint not! Christ tells us how we may show our love of him, by keeping his commandments, and by loving one another. By loving one another truly, so truly, as to desire that we may all be together with Christ for all eternity. By loving one another so truly, as to try to forward each other in the way of our best happiness. By loving one another so truly, as not to love, far less to encourage, but to grieve for each other's faults, and to try to lessen them. Well may we pray that we faint not, for indeed there is much to be done by all of us. May God give us the heart both to will and to

do; that, as we have, above the common lot of our brethren, received abundant mercies, so we may be enabled, through God's grace, to show forth more abundantly our love towards God and towards one another!

SERMON XXX.

OUTWARD CHANGES.

PSALM, XXX. 6—8.

And in my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved. Lord, by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong: thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled. I cried to thee, O Lord; and unto the Lord I made supplication.

ALL Christians, in all ages, have delighted in the habitual use of the Book of Psalms. It is not only that they are still our favourite songs of praise in our public worship; but in private houses, by the sick bed, or in seasons of sorrow, or of care, or of joy, when we feel that we have offended God, or when we are more than usually full of love and gratitude to him, the Psalms furnish us with expressions suited to our various wants, and more exactly meeting the occasion than any words of our own. For although the direct allusions to a life after death occur only very seldom, and

although for this reason hymns written under the Christian dispensation might seem more natural to us, yet, so entire is the trust in God, so ardent the hope, and so strong the faith in his promises expressed in the Psalms, that their language comes up as fully to the hope and faith of a Christian, as if, like the Gospel, it had openly declared salvation through the blood of Jesus Christ.

An instance of what I have been saying, is to be found in the words of the text. They record an experience of the writer which belongs, or will belong, equally to us all. They describe three states which are, or have been, or will be, all ours. That is, we all know, or have known, or shall know, two of these states; it would be happy for us if we should all as surely know the third also. We are sure of knowing the prosperity and the carelessness, and the chastening; would to God that we might all know also the penitence and the final blessing.

The first state is thus described; "In my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved. Lord, by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong." When I said that we were sure of knowing this state, I meant so far as it is a state of prosperity; it does not follow that we shall share all the feelings described as belonging to it. We are all enjoying our good things, and apt enough to set our hearts on them, and to trust

to their continuing with us; but I do not know that we all thank God for them, or acknowledge even in word that they come from his goodness. So in the boastful prayer of the Pharisee in the Gospel, who gloried that he was not as other men were; we share enough in his pride, and are inclined enough to think too well of ourselves; but I do not know that we should equally agree with him in thanking God as the author of our supposed superiority. And thus the words both of that parable and of the verses in the text do but condemn us the more. For if it were pride when it sounded like thankfulness; if even whilst acknowledging God as the author of all our blessings and advantages, we really are not glorifying him, but ourselves, and value ourselves rather for having them than God for giving them to us; how much more manifestly is it pride and sin if we do not think of God at all, but confine our rejoicing wholly to our own state, without so much as a thought on him to whom we are indebted for it!

I said that we all had experience of the first state described by the Psalmist, the state of prosperity. Some fancy, when they hear the word "prosperity," that it belongs only to great and high fortunes, and so they think that it does not apply to them. But indeed there is not one of us here to whom it does not apply: for what seems

in these times and in our station of life to be merely a common share of good fortune, would in ancient times have been deemed a rare prosperity. To rise in the morning and lie down at night in perfect peace; to have never known the evils of sword or famine; to be furnished continually with food and clothing, and with many things besides for our comfort and enjoyment; what was the land of milk and honey, even as promised to the Israelites on the supposition of their faithful obedience; what was the rest, and what the blessings of Canaan, more than we enjoy every day, amidst all our sins and all our ingratitude?

We are in prosperity, and we say within ourselves that we shall never be moved. We do not say so in words; nay, if we were asked the question, we should say that we believed the very contrary to be true; that we knew the uncertainty of all human things, and fully expected to meet with our share of trouble. I have no doubt that we should all make this answer, and make it with a firm belief in its sincerity. But the leaning of our hearts is the other way; our common temper is to calculate on our comforts continuing; we act just as if they were sure to do so; we give ourselves up to the things around us; our hearts are hardened, and we think not of God, nor of his judgments. Yet if we really expected them to come upon us, we could not help thinking of

them. If we were told by a voice from heaven that the cholera would break out in this place within a twelvemonth, and would destroy many; even though we were told nothing as to our own fate, yet the fear would continually haunt us; it would at any rate give us great disquiet, even though it might fail of leading us to repentance. Yet it is much more certain than our death would be in the case supposed, that we shall each of us meet with our trials and afflictions, with a time when we shall look back with regret upon the many opportunities which we have lost. It is most certain that we shall be moved from our present prosperity. In what particular manner we may be so moved we cannot indeed know; it may be that our health will fail; it may be that our incomes will become narrow; it may be, and if we do not die in early life, it must be, that we shall have to mourn for the loss of some of those who are dearest to us. But whether it be some one of these or all, life will certainly give us a taste of its bitterness; a time will come when we shall wake in the morning with a very different prospect than that of passing another day in peace, in plenty, and in enjoyment.

The second state, then, which the Psalmist describes, will surely be ours; God will hide his face from us, and we shall be troubled. But these words have a higher and a far more dreadful

meaning than I have yet noticed, and evil indeed will be our condition if they apply to us in this worst sense also; we *shall* be troubled if this be added to our other afflictions, that God shall hide his face from us. Perhaps if ever we do fancy ourselves in sickness or in sorrow, we fancy also that "Religion," as we call it, will be our effectual comforter. We think that when our earthly treasure be taken from us, our heavenly treasure will yet remain. We do not think then what it would be, if God were, in the full sense of the word, to hide his face from us. Believe me, it is but too possible to lose our earthly good things, and yet gain no hope of heavenly things. It may be that we shall be overcome by despair; that the thought of years spent in sin, when we refused instruction, will make us fear that the accepted time is over. Then the promises of the Gospel will be to us a dead letter; we shall be able to see nothing in the word of God but its threatenings of judgment. It may be that our faith may fail, that when we most need the hope of eternal life to cheer us amidst the ruin of our life here, our hearts will ever be whispering, What if it be all but a cunningly devised fable? What if there be no resurrection, no Christ, no God? Allowing these to be but the mere temptations of the evil one; allowing that we combat them whenever they arise in our bosoms, that we in no way consent to them with our

hearts, but wish utterly the contrary; allowing that our faith be not wholly shipwrecked for eternity, yet no words can tell the intense misery of the earthly trial. None can speak fully,—God grant that we may none of us learn by experience, —what it is to have our very prayers checked within us by rising thoughts of unbelief; to feel our soul tossed up and down with doubts and fears, and its anchor unable to steady it. Or yet worse; not worse, nor so bad, in the earthly suffering, but infinitely worse for eternity, it may be that our hearts will be hardened, that we shall have no desire to turn to God, though our earthly idols may be broken. Then God's face is indeed hidden, and for ever. We cannot love him, and shall never love him any more; we cannot pray to him, and shall pray no more for ever; we cannot turn to him, and the gulph between us can never be passed again. But the very excess of this evil makes it not so painful to endure; it is the chief point of its hopelessness, that we cannot feel it. Our end may be perfectly calm, without struggle or fear, because God has utterly hid himself from us, and therefore his merciful warnings will not be vouchsafed to us.

But the Psalmist goes on to say, "I cried to thee, O Lord, and unto the Lord I made supplication." God had not so hidden his face from him as to refuse his prayers, or to make him unwilling

to utter them. His troubles, whatever was their nature, were a wholesome chastening to him, and no more; they did but awaken him in time from his proud security.

And in this same way, many a servant of God, in later times, has had reason to thank his fatherly care in visiting him with sobering and seasonable afflictions. But the point to be observed is, that we cannot reckon on troubles having this wholesome effect; the sorrow, indeed, is sure to come; but there is a sorrow which worketh death, as well as a sorrow which leadeth to repentance. I believe that many persons deceive themselves in this; I believe that many encourage themselves in their thoughtlessness while they are in prosperity, by counting upon the wholesome effects of a change of fortune; that they may as well enjoy themselves while their good things last; because when they fail, the very loss of them will in itself be their medicine, and will be sure to turn their hearts to God. But this is far from being generally true. Undoubtedly, if a man has lived in the faith and fear of God habitually, and has only been surprised a little out of his usual watchfulness by some great increase of worldly enjoyment, then the loss of this enjoyment is apt to make him fall back upon his old habits; the oil is ready for his lamp, and when God's warning awakens him out of his short slumber, he has only to arise, and to

trim it. But how different is their case who have laid in no supply of oil, but fondly imagine that they can get it at once, merely because they may be reminded of their want of it! What I have said on a former occasion with regard to sickness, is equally true of distress of any other kind; it is a very good time for perfecting a lesson learnt before, but a very bad time for learning it from the beginning. And what says experience? Out of the multitudes who are in distress of one kind or another, how many are made true Christians by it? out of all those who have known sickness, even of a serious kind, how many has it turned to God? The truth is, that there are no circumstances in which the human heart is absolutely forced to take refuge in God, from a want of all other supports. What the support may be, differs according to the temper and circumstances of the individual; in some it may be an extreme sanguineness of nature, which never gives up the hope of a change for the better in our worldly concerns; in others it may be intense pride, which retires the more into itself, the more heavy is the outward pressure; and which would feel ashamed to apply for aid to any one, even to God himself, because it shrinks from a confession of weakness. In others again, it may be mere hardness and doggedness of nature; in others, the insensibility produced by habit, and the long distaste for heavenly things, which putting

them wholly out of our minds, has long taught us to rest in the kindness of friends, or in the best comfort that we can draw out of the examples of other men's sufferings. But let it be what it will, it keeps from us the desire of turning to God, unless the experience of our happier years has taught us what God is, and how blessed is his service. Therefore, if we would wish the case of the Psalmist to be altogether our own, we must begin now that we are in its first stage. We are in prosperity, and full of confidence; it were something of a step gained, if we would learn to thank God for it; if while we felt too proud of it, we had at least so much good in us, as to say and to feel, "Thou, Lord, of thy goodness hast made my hill so strong." I fear that even the very fault of the Psalmist is a pitch above our virtue; that which required chastening in him, is more than we can ascend to. And then can we wonder that our feelings are not like his feelings; that his love to God is a thing which too many of us are unable so much as to conceive? Yet God knoweth them that are his; he sees those amongst us who are disposed to take these things to heart, and whose spirits are ready to answer to the call of his Spirit. In mercy he has hidden this knowledge from us, that we should neither judge our neighbour, nor despair of him, nor yet think that our care and help is not wanted where God may seem to have

taken the man to himself. So the word is thrown out, to bring forth fruit we know not where; but we are sure that it will not be utterly lost. May each one for himself resolve that it shall not be lost in him! Last year we had the warnings; and I fully believe, that although to many they were utterly wasted, yet in some they quickened that which was dull, and roused that which was slumbering. Now, again, the voice of joy and health is in our dwellings; may the voice of gratitude and of faith be heard there also? Let us not think that we shall never be moved, for that were folly; but let us think that it is God who has made our hill so strong, and that though that hill will surely be overthrown, for it is but of the earth and earthly, yet that there remains for God's true children, a hill, whose foundations are eternal, whose builder and maker is God.

SERMON XXXI.

INWARD CHANGES.

MATTHEW, xxii. 12.

Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding-garment?

IN the description of the last judgment, given in the twenty-fifth chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel, there occurs a passage, whose lesson is nearly the same with that of the text. The wicked are represented as saying to Christ, "Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?" For the lesson of both these passages seems to be, that men stand greatly in need of self-knowledge; that, from one cause or another, they think themselves better than they are: not feeling, on the one hand, their want of the wedding-garment of true righteousness; nor being aware, on the other, of the presence of much actual evil which is really

tainting their souls. Thus they deceive themselves while they are in God's church here: and would fain, if we may so far assume the literal truth of our Lord's description, enter into God's church in heaven with the same presumption. But then the glass of their true state is held up to them, and they feel, for the first time, that they are evil, and not good. "Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me." "Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; for many are called, but few are chosen."

The lesson, then, contained in these passages of Scripture, may be expressed in the words of St. Paul: "If we would judge ourselves, we shall not be judged of the Lord." "If we would inquire, and see whether or no we have on us the wedding-garment of righteousness; whether we are every day neglecting and despising Christ, or no; then we should here by ourselves surely anticipate God's judgment of us; and if our heart condemned us not, then might we justly have confidence towards God." And this self-examination, as it is most necessary to be practised, so also it ought to be practised wisely; to be directed, that is, to the right points; for if it be not, it may produce great disquiet, but no peaceable fruit of righteousness; it may be a great means of harassing and distracting our minds, but none of improving them.

Now we will consider the case of those whom we call good men; what their need of self-examination is, and how they should conduct it. Let us take, therefore, any person who is certainly in earnest in his profession of the Gospel;—it matters not whether he be old or young;—a person who is what is commonly called serious, who is regular in the public worship of God, and at the communion; whose language and whose practice seem generally to be according to the Spirit of God. Let such a person suppose that he has got on the wedding-garment; let him imagine that he is treading his course heavenward; let him look forward to the blessedness of being for ever with Christ and all Christ's servants; let his habitual state of mind, therefore, be cheerful and happy. What shall we say to this? Shall we say, that here are the fruits of Christ's spirit; that the man is enjoying the peace of God; that in him is visibly fulfilled the assurance, that godliness hath the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come? I think we should suppose so in the case of another; I think that it would be a breach of charity to think otherwise. But turn to the man himself, and let him consider whether he should think so also. Surely there is many a passage in God's word, not meant to frighten or confound, far less to turn God's promises into nothing; but yet, which he may not pass by unheeded. What is it,

"Happy is the man that feareth always?" What is it, that "that which is highly esteemed among men, is an abomination in the sight of God?" What is it, that "to be raised again with Christ, it is necessary first to have died with him?" What is it, that "we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God?" What is it, that we "must take up our cross daily?" These, and many other such Scriptures, have their meaning and their use for all of us; for the good and happy servant of his Lord, not less than for the careless and disobedient. And let him not neglect to use them; let him see how he stands; let him consider whether, indeed, the heaven that he desires is really his; whether his life is but a sure and gradual advance in the way of eternal glory. He may say that it is; not, indeed, for his own merits, but for Christ's, that he has the true wedding-garment of righteousness; not his own imperfect works, which never could deserve the name, but Christ's perfect righteousness imputed to him as one of Christ's members. And therefore he may say, here is the peace of the Spirit of Christ, dwelling in the hearts of those who, having cast off the righteousness which is of the law, have put their trust in the righteousness of God only.

Now this language, which I think I have not in any degree misrepresented, shows what wary handling the Scripture calls for; how certainly

any single or partial view of it leads into serious error. I think that any good and sober Christian would feel that this application of what is certainly a scriptural truth, when properly applied, cannot be according to the mind of the Spirit; that it cannot be right or agreeable to God's will, to make Christ the minister of carelessness. But yet he may be puzzled to know how a scriptural truth can be otherwise than according to the mind of the Spirit. O that we could all thoroughly and practically understand this seeming puzzle! O that we would know and remember to search the Scriptures, not for truths, but for lessons; not for doctrines to be used always and by all persons, as eternally and universally true; but for medicines fitted to our own particular want, be it what it may! That we would feel that there are many of God's words, containing the divinest truth for those who need them, which, if applied universally by those who do not need them, and at the time when they do not need them, become a savour of death unto death! If we were so to read the Scriptures, how it would quicken our knowledge of our own hearts on the one hand, and from how much superstition, and fanaticism, and uncharitableness of every kind, would it save us on the other!

It is manifest that that cannot be a right application of Scripture, which would encourage care-

lessness and presumption. A good man, therefore, such as I have described, would not do well to interpret the wedding-garment as meaning only Christ's imputed righteousness; and, consequently, that believing he had this, he might glory in Christ safely and freely. By looking into himself, he would feel that he was cheerful and confident enough already; that he did not stand in need of comfort or encouragement; that his natural, or, at any rate, his actual tendency, was to comfort and encourage himself sufficiently. He might ask, "For whom is Christ's warning intended, if not for me? Surely those who are cast down and fearful already, cannot need to be made more so; if this one of God's medicines be laid up for the use of any living soul, it must be for me, and for such as I am. Therefore I may not reject it, because in the same ample store-house I find medicines of another kind, strengthening, exhilarating, manifestly intended for the benefit of those whose constitution or state of mind is just the opposite to mine. I have no need to shelter myself under the plea of Christ's imputed righteousness, till, by self-examination, by seeing whether I have the robe of any righteousness of my own, I may be shaken from my state of easy confidence, and, learning my danger, may then need and prize my deliverance."

This, I think, all would say was scriptural truth;

but then it would be contended by some, that this is indeed the process by which a man must be brought to Christ in the first instance; but that being once his, and justified through faith, he is entitled, for the time to come, to enjoy Christ's freedom; that he is living under grace, and, therefore, is dead to the law. And here, I think, we have traced to the head some of the great religious errors and disputes which so distract God's people. It seems to be taken for granted, that the various states of a Christian's course, and the particular scriptural remedies which he needs under them, occur in a man's life once for all; that first, there comes the careless, or unregenerate period, during which he needs God's warnings and threatenings; that then comes the period of repentance, of faith, of conversion; after which follows, for the rest of his days, the period of sanctification, of peace with God, of thankful assurance of salvation. This seems to have been taken for granted; and, therefore, those who have felt the practical evils produced by such a view, while they did not perceive the true point of error, were induced to lower away the sense of some passages of God's word which seemed most encouraging, because they truly felt that such passages in their obvious meaning could not be rightly applied to the common state of mind of the generality of Christians.

But, my brethren, whatever we do, let us not abate one tittle of the freeness of Christ's promises, nor yet of the strictness of his warnings. Both are needed in all their force, both are the very truth of God, the very bread of life; but not for the same persons, nor for any one man at the same time, nor yet each for one portion of our lives only; so that when we have once needed the comfort, we may for ever give up the warning. We need them each in their turn a thousand times over, before our life is done. To-day our souls may be almost in heaven; convinced of their own sin, and of God's pardon; full of humility, full of faith; justified, sanctified, saved. But will it certainly be so to-morrow? May not the very abundance of our joy have already lessened our humility and watchfulness; have already made an opening for the tempter; have already enabled him in some degree to build again the evil which we had destroyed? and, lo! we are again transgressors. Then comes again the spirit of warning, and the spirit of godly fear, and the spirit of penitence, and the sense of free forgiveness. But if we will violently stay this natural course; if, when we need the spirit of warning, we choose to listen only to the spirit of comfort; if, when sin is within us, we talk of the children of God being incapable of sin, of God's upholding grace, of the perseverance of his saints, of their full assurance of salvation;

what do we but believe a lie, and ruinously apply to ourselves, as general truths, passages of God's word which are indeed full of truth and benefit when used by persons in that particular state of mind which is the very opposite of ours?

What then? can we never have assurance? never know peace? never feel that we are Christ's, and that none can pluck us out of his hand? never say truly that the law is dead to us, because we are alive to God? Yes, my brethren, we may have all these feelings, they are amongst God's gifts to his children; it is as false to say that we can never have them, as to say that if we do have them at all, we must have them always.

There is joy in this life, there is peace, there is a full assurance of faith; but not perfect joy, not perfect peace, not an assurance of faith perpetual and abiding. For look at Him in whom was no sin of his own, yet who, bearing all our sins, as though they were his own, is thus, in his language and feelings, made a perfect pattern of our state, the sinless of the sinful. What fuller assurance could ever be expressed by mortal tongue than when he said: "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him. I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world; again I leave the world, and go to the Father?" Yet after this, did ever mortal tongue utter deeper expressions of humiliation than his, when he cried, "My

God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" And if this were so with Him, the Captain of our salvation, shall it not be the same with us also? To-day, penitent, justified, and full of assurance; to-morrow, it may be, sinful, cast down, and full of humiliation and godly fear. So it will be, and so it must be, till, having finished our course, and the work of the tempter being ended, and his power stopped for ever, we may find that there is a peace to be no more disturbed, a rest to be no more broken, an assurance to be no more troubled with fear,

But till then, while we are in the body, our spiritual medicine will be for ever varying; and woe to us if, in our blindness, we take and apply that which, to our actual disorder, is a poison, and not a cure! And, therefore, if we are cheerful and happy, called good by others, not without some testimony of our own conscience that they call us rightly, then let us not be high-minded, but fear; then let us examine ourselves carefully, let us look to the height and to the breadth of God's law, and measure our own lives by it; and so learn our many neglects of Christ, and offences against him, and that our robe of righteousness ill becomes his supper, that it will not bear his questioning. So shall our increased knowledge of ourselves waken anxiety, and shame, and penitence; so shall penitence awaken faith; so shall

faith, while most earnestly shrouding us under the robe of Christ's righteousness, yet most carefully, for love's sake, repair the breaches in our own, that we may be changed into his image. So shall we grow in grace, and with our hope more and more assured, by the timely awakening of our fear.

But in this wholesome and Christian examination of our hearts and lives, let us beware of a morbid and unwholesome scrutiny about the exact nature of our feelings. We are here treading on the verge either of presumptuous fanaticism or of madness. We do well to examine how we are spending our time or our money; whether we pray and read the Scriptures; whether we are kind, temperate in all things, pure, and true. But we do not do well when we wish to scrutinize nicely the exact nature of our faith or our repentance; whether we were sorry enough for the offence which we had committed against God; whether we really abhor our own righteousness entirely, and have no lurking trust in our hearts, in any thing that we do; whether, finally, we love God truly for himself, or are most moved to do so by the hope of his rewards. These inquiries, vain and perplexing to all, are to some most fatal; they turn our thoughts to that which none can safely or healthfully watch, the actual workings of our own minds and feelings; they teach us to try to analyze

what defies analysis, the mingled nature of our desires, and hopes, and fears; they make our spiritual state to depend upon our power of metaphysical observation. And the object of all this is to gain, what no sound mind can ever gain, an assurance of its own perpetual acceptance with God. All this unhealthy restlessness is to ascertain that we have had true faith, as if then the work was done, and all the rest of our lives might be peace and security. But be assured that this is not the self-examination which God's word, the pure and calm spirit of wisdom, encourages us to practise. It is easy to know generally whether we care for God or no, whether we believe in Christ, whether we are aware of the imperfection of our own goodness. But the more particular examination belongs to our actions; and from looking at them we can best judge of our feelings. "He that loveth me," says Christ, "keepeth my commandments;" so far as we do not keep them, our love is deficient; so far as we do not overcome the world, our faith is weak. Pray we that both may be increased more and more; but let us not turn our cares and anxiety from this wholesome prayer to the fond inquiry whether our faith is of such a kind as may release us from all further anxiety about it.

APPENDIX TO SERMON XI.

THERE has been no period since the apostolic age in which the truth enforced in this sermon has not been needed by the Christian church in practice. But in theory it would not commonly be disputed in any country where the Scriptures were studied; and it is only the recent revival of the doctrines of the nonjurors of the last century, which makes it proper to add some further explanation of it.

There are three characters which have belonged, either separately or jointly, to the ministers of religion; the characters of teacher, of governor, and of priest. Of these, one or other of the two first is essential to a minister of the Christian religion, and both together are perfectly legitimate; the third is absolutely inconsistent with his office, and cannot be assumed without profaneness.

We understand readily enough what is meant by a "teacher" and by a "governor;" but what is meant by "a priest," many perhaps would find it difficult to explain. And this is natural; for the notion having originated mostly in falsehood and delusion, is full of vagueness, and has from time to time sheltered itself under the clear and well understood notions of teaching and government, with which it has no necessary connexion. But it is important, if possible, to develop it.

The assumption on which a priesthood proceeds is

the perpetual superiority, in a religious point of view, of some men over others, so that the inferior require the mediation of the superior before they can offer to God any acceptable worship. I lay the stress on the epithet "*perpetual*," for in this consists the essential falsehood and evil of the system. It may well happen that some men have the knowledge of God, while others have it not. But here is the difference between a *ministry* and a *priesthood;* that while a *minister of religion* labours to destroy his own superiority over his neighbours, by communicating to them all his own knowledge, a *priest* wishes it to be perpetual, and therefore keeps his knowledge to himself. Accordingly, wherever a priesthood has been based on a real superiority of knowledge, the utmost pains have been taken to prevent this knowledge from being fully enjoyed by the people at large; it has been sometimes communicated in part, but certain esoteric doctrines or mysteries have been kept in reserve, on purpose to ensure to the priest's superiority a perpetual duration.

This has been the practice of those priesthoods, which, not being hereditary, have grounded their superiority on their superior knowledge. In the hereditary or caste priesthoods, the superiority being grounded on birth and race, generally on an alleged descent from, or connexion with, the God who was the object of worship, was by its very nature perpetual, so long as the blood of the race was preserved pure. Here there was no occasion for any superiority of knowledge; it was only necessary to prevent a mixture of races, and the distinction between priest and people would be kept up for ever.

The Jewish priesthood stands alone, as being neither

grounded on a superiority of knowledge, nor, though strictly hereditary, on any superiority of descent. Like others of the Jewish institutions, that of the cities of refuge for example, it was ordained partly as an accommodation to the notions and feelings of the age, and partly as typical of the real and perfect Priest who was to come. Religion without an earthly priesthood was a notion utterly strange to a people that had so long sojourned in Egypt; religion without a true and heavenly priest is incompatible with the corrupted state of man's nature. Besides, the typical sacrifices of the law were to be offered by a typical priesthood, and that priesthood, to meet the universal feeling of the East, was to be hereditary. But at the same time, the common evils of a priesthood were prevented by the provision of a constant succession of prophets; that is, of *ministers of religion*, whether as teachers or governors, with no distinction of race nor superiority of order, but with an influence in the concerns of life, and in all of religion, but its ceremonial, far greater than was enjoyed by the priesthood.

A priesthood, we have seen, may be grounded on superiority of knowledge or superiority of race, and it assumes in both cases that the superiority is perpetual. But mere superiority of knowledge will not justify the claim, unless a superiority of birth or race, an inherent natural superiority, be assumed as subsisting also. The man who has obtained a higher degree of knowledge, says to his ignorant neighbours,—"I must pray to God for you, for you know not how to pray for yourselves; I must perform the rites of religion for you, for you know not how to perform them properly." But then comes the natural answer, which the minister of religion

so gladly welcomes—which the priest dreads and evades: "Teach us to pray also, teach us how to worship God acceptably." The priest repels this request by saying, —"It is not right to communicate these mysteries to the vulgar:" that is, he assumes a natural difference between himself and other men, not growing out of their different degrees of knowledge, but antecedent to them, justifying them, and perpetuating them. Thus, strictly speaking, the claim of a priesthood rests only on a supposed essential and permanent difference between man and man. If there be no such difference, if all men be of one race and of one intellectual and moral nature, then the claim in any mere man is founded on falsehood; and a merely human priesthood, except in the single instance of the *typical* priesthood of the Jews, is an institution contrary to truth, and therefore contrary to true religion.

Now let us observe what has taken place actually in Christianity. If superiority of language were of itself sufficient to justify a priesthood, never were any men better entitled to become priests than the Apostles of our Lord. They were the sole depositaries of that knowledge of God, without which none could be saved. They were endowed over and above with certain extraordinary powers, fitting them not only for teaching, but for government. Accordingly, they were the teachers and governors of the Christian Church, to the full extent of the terms: and because their teaching, by being embodied in books, was capable of being made perpetual, they are still our teachers: all that we know of Christianity we learn from their writings only, and all that they have told us concerning it, we receive at once on their authority. They would also be our governors, if

government did not essentially require to be exercised by living men; and thus, though it be possible to teach posterity, it is not possible to govern them. But as they *are* our only divinely appointed teachers, so they *were* our only divinely appointed governors; God having never given to any since either the knowledge which marked them out for the one office, or the extraordinary gifts and powers which marked them out for the other. Yet even these divinely appointed teachers and governors advanced no claim to the office of priests, nor, except in one point to be noticed hereafter, did they exercise any peculiar priestly power; because both their knowledge and their powers were given them to raise their brethren, not to establish between them a perpetual difference; and because all men in their relations to God are essentially equal; and to talk of their purity and impurity in his sight, is on the one hand to forget that common sin by which all are made unclean, and on the other hand, to despise that common redemption, by which our true and divine Priest has made us all clean.

But a priestly power is claimed for Christian ministers in two points;—first, it is said that their ministration is essential to the sacraments; and secondly, they are said to have a certain power of the keys, an expression in itself sufficiently vague, and which veils, under a convenient mysticism, notions, which if developed, are too unchristian to bear the light.

I. First, it is sometimes maintained, that the sacraments have no virtue unless administered by a regularly ordained clergyman. Now if the sacraments are held to be essential means of grace, the position is this, that to the moral improvement and consequent salvation of

mankind, something else is necessary in addition to Christ's merits and promises on the one hand, and men's faith in them on the other. Christ commands us to eat bread and drink wine in remembrance of his death. A number of Christians assemble to fulfil this command, and to refresh their remembrance of him by the means he has directed. Can they not eat the bread and drink the wine; can they not remember, believe, love, exercise every moral and spiritual feeling which the communion was designed to cherish, without the repetition of a particular form of words by one particular individual? Is it any thing less than a positive blasphemy to require the mediation of an earthly priest between the Christian and his true divine Mediator? The fact is, that as long as the true view of the communion was retained, namely, that it was a commemoration of Christ's sacrifice, in which every man offered himself also as a living and spiritual sacrifice to God, so long would the pretended necessity of a priestly mediation be seen to be false and profane. But when, for the very purposes of priestly ambition, the communion was represented, not as a commemoration of Christ's sacrifice, but as a repetition of it; when the spiritual sacrifice of every Christian, which of necessity implied that every man was his own priest, was superseded by the notion that the church offered up Christ for the remission of sins, then it followed naturally enough that a sacrifice required a priest, that an external rite of sacrifice performed by the church, implied a regular priesthood to offer it; and thus there was raised up a fabric of profane superstition, which the Church of England justly describes by the strong expressions, "blasphemous fables and dangerous deceits."—[Article xxxi.]

It is one thing to ordain that, in the public and common service of the church, prayers should be offered, and the sacraments administered only by those whose particular business it is to minister in the congregation; and another to assert, that essentially, and not as a matter of order, but really and spiritually, there can be no true sacramental commemoration of Christ's death, without the presence of a minister. For this last notion there is not the faintest shadow of authority in the New Testament; and it is manifestly absurd and profane, so long as we keep the true scriptural view of the nature and objects of the communion. It is consistent, and only consistent, with the opinion that the communion is a literal sacrifice performed by the church; and if this opinion be utterly false, then the superstition of a priesthood which has been grounded upon it, becomes immediately indefensible.

With regard to baptism, the question has been actually decided by the authorities of the Church of England, and is, indeed, sufficiently plain to any one whose notions of Christianity are derived from the Scriptures. For where repentance and faith exist, there is the qualification for baptism; and those who maintain that a layman may not administer it, supposing that a minister be not at hand, must be supposed to mean that baptism is not essential to Christianity; for, undoubtedly, he who repents and believes is entitled to the promises of the Gospel; and if baptism be the necessary mode of his admission into the church, any Christian may baptize him; but if baptism be a mere outward ceremony, then, indeed, the church may determine which of two ceremonies it prefers to sacrifice, whether it will dispense with the form of sprinkling

with water altogether, or with the performance of the rite by a regular minister.

II. The Christian ministry are a priesthood, because they have "the power of the keys." The vagueness of the expression, as I said before, is well adapted to veil the full profaneness of the doctrine which its supporters would gladly insinuate, but dare not openly avow. For if "the power of the keys" be stated plainly to mean "a power of taking off church censures," then there is no doubt but that it may lawfully be exercised by those to whom the church commits its authority; but then this is a power of government, not of priesthood, and belongs essentially to the supreme power in every government, the right of pardon being naturally co-extensive with the right of punishment. It would not suit, therefore, the purpose of the advocates of a priesthood, to give this definition of the "power of the keys." But again, were they to interpret it as meaning "a real power to forgive or refuse forgiveness spiritually to the souls of sinners," so that he on whom the minister pronounces absolution, becomes thereby cleared of sin in the sight of God, and he to whom he refuses it, remains unforgiven by God; this, which would certainly make it a really priestly power, is too manifestly unchristian to be openly maintained in a country where the Scriptures are in general circulation. Or, if it be explained as "a declaratory power of pronouncing an absolution which God bestows, and not the minister," the explanation becomes as vague as that which it professes to explain; for here is an ambiguity in the use of the word "*power*," of no small importance. In the public services of the Church of England, none but an episcopally ordained minister has *power* to read the absolu-

tion; that is, no one else is authorized by law to do so, and if any one should do it, it would be a breach of the order of the church, and as such, punishable. To say, therefore, that the minister, and he only, has power to pronounce God's absolution of sinners in the public ministry of the church, is, in one sense, a very true proposition, no one else being allowed by the rules of our church to perform that part of divine service. But this makes nothing for the priesthood, as it is only a legal power, not a priestly one. If "power" mean more than this, it is merely the "*power*" of the second interpretation less openly avowed. For the power of declaration, except as referring to the public declaration of absolution in divine service, is an expression only applicable to the first preachers of the Gospel. The Apostles were *empowered* to declare forgiveness of sins to all who repented and believed; it was a truth revealed to them only, and none else could declare it, because none else knew it. And the Apostles have declared, and are still declaring it; they tell it to us by their writings, as they told it to the first Christians by their words. But they having been empowered to declare it in God's name, we have learnt it from them; we have received and believed their witness: and it is idle to talk of a minister having an exclusive power of declaring what we have heard already from the very source to which alone he is himself indebted for it. Or, if the power of declaration means not the declaration of the general truth, that God forgives the penitent believer, but of a particular application of it to a given individual, that this man is a penitent believer, and therefore forgiven; then it remains to inquire what is the assumed authority for this application of it. Does

the minister *know* that the man is penitent, or only *believe* it? If he *know* it, it can only be by divine illumination, and that of the highest kind, an illumination enabling him to see into the heart of another. If we have so high a gift, then of course his absolution is equivalent to the absolution of God infallibly; but where is the proof that he has it, or, rather, would not the claim to it be either profaneness or insanity? If, on the other hand, he only *believes* that the man is penitent, on what grounds is his belief founded? on a revelation from God, or on his own judgment and experience of human nature? If the former, where is the sign of it? If the latter, it is a power only so far connected with his ministerial office, as that office may have furnished him with peculiar opportunities of observing the human mind; but if he be young, or weak, or inexperienced, it may be possessed by many a layman in far greater perfection than by him.

But those who uphold the notion of a priesthood, lay great stress on our Lord's charge to his Apostles, as reported by St. John, "Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them, and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained." And as the latter part of this passage is used by the Church of England, in the service for the ordination of priests or presbyters, it is maintained that the church at least supposes our Lord's gifts to his Apostles to be extended to the modern clergy, that they too receive the Holy Ghost, and have the power of remitting sins or of retaining them.

Let me not be supposed for a moment to be placing the language of the Church of England on the same level with the words of Christ. To ascertain the meaning of Christ's words, is to ascertain the truth; whereas, the opinion of the Church of England, although it may conclude against the consistency of an individual, who, while belonging to that church were to dispute its authority; is not competent by itself to determine the real merits of a disputed question. It is important to bear in mind this distinction.

1. Christ's charge to his Apostles was given primarily with reference to their mission. "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you." It may be compared with his charge under the same circumstances, as reported by St. Matthew and St. Mark. "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." (Matthew, xxviii. 18—20.) "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark, xvi. 15, 16.) The Apostles were to go and preach the Gospel to every one. He who received them, received Him that sent them; and such an one was to be baptized, and would be saved. He who rejected them, rejected also Him who sent them; and such an one would be condemned. They, therefore, whose sins the Apostles remitted, by receiving them to baptism, were truly forgiven; they whose sins

the Apostles retained, by not admitting them into the church, they were truly condemned.

In this sense, the words are applicable no less to Christian ministers in our days when proclaiming the Gospel to those who have never heard of it before. Still, to speak generally, and leaving particular cases to God's righteous judgment, they who hear our word and are baptized, shall be saved, and they who reject our word shall be condemned. And thus, our Lord's words in their primary meaning may be fitly repeated to any Christian minister now.

2. Besides the one great message of the Gospel, salvation through faith in Christ crucified, the Apostles were farther to teach all men to do whatsoever Christ had commanded them. As a signal instance of this, they taught the necessity of purity, the sinfulness of sensualities, which the heathens, in general, accounted of no importance. And here, also, he who despised them, "despised," as St. Paul says, "not man, but God, *who also hath given unto us his Holy Spirit.*" I request attention to the last clause of this verse; meanwhile here is another sense of our Lord's words, applying not only to the rejection of the Gospel altogether, but to the not living according to Christ's commands. In this respect also, he who did according to the Apostle's word would be saved; he who despised it would be condemned.

In this sense also, the words of our Lord's charge may be properly used to Christian ministers now. Still there are many, calling themselves Christians, who justify duelling, palliate covetousness, sensuality, &c., under various disguises and excuses. But let the

Christian minister teach his hearers "to do all things whatsoever Christ hath commanded them;" and then whether they will hear or no, he who does according to the minister's teaching will be saved, and he who does not, will be condemned.

3. But Christ, while giving this charge to his Apostles, "breathed on them, and said, Receive ye the Holy Ghost." That is, he gave them the witness, that what they were to say, came not from them, but from God. And so St. Paul refers to this witness, in the words alluded to above, "He who despises, despises not man but God, who also hath given unto us his Holy Spirit." That the Holy Spirit here spoken of has the same meaning as in the words of St. John, seems certain from the context. It is no less certain that it means some visible and manifest gift, which might show that God was with the Apostles in truth. Hooker says that it was not the miraculous power of the Spirit, for this was not given till the day of Pentecost; but "a holy and ghostly authority, authority over the souls of men, authority, a part whereof consisteth in power to remit and retain sins;" "the power of the Holy Ghost for castigation and relaxation of sin." So Hooker writes, in the fifth book of his Ecclesiastical Polity; a part of his work containing passages so unworthy of all that precedes, and of much that follows it, that nothing but a knowledge of the power of party spirit even over a great mind, could allow us to believe that they were written in honesty. It cannot be shown that no miraculous power[a] was given to the Apostles till the day of

[a] It is said in St. John, vii. 39, "The Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified." But the "glorification" of Christ, applies as much to his resurrection as to his ascension; I think even more.

Pentecost. The gift of tongues on that day was the signal for the public exercise of their ministry; but who shall say that neither the gifts of faith, or of knowledge, or of wisdom, were conferred before, although they were not publicly exercised. Nay, we know that one of these gifts was given before the day of Pentecost; for St. Luke says, that our Lord "opened their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures," (xxiv. 45,) and assuredly we cannot suppose the fifty days from the resurrection to the day of Pentecost to have passed without any preparation of the minds of the Apostles for their coming work; especially as on that very day of Pentecost, when no other gift but that of tongues is recorded to have been communicated, Peter immediately spoke to the people in a manner which shows that he must have been previously endowed with the gifts of preaching, προφητεία, of knowledge, and of wisdom.

But, on the other hand, it may be contended against Hooker, that "the Holy Ghost," in the New Testament, never means any thing so vague and ambiguous as the language in which he interprets it: whether it be used

However, there is no question that the general outpouring of the gifts of the Holy Spirit began from the day of Pentecost. I only think that St. John, who never mentions the day of Pentecost expressly, would not have excluded the only giving of the Holy Ghost, which he has himself recorded, (xx. 22,) from being *a* fulfilment of the promise of Christ, though not *the whole* fulfilment of it. But "the promise of the Holy Ghost" always signifies the conferring some gift real and perceptible; to use our Lord's own comparison, "the sound of the wind must be heard, though we may not know whence it comes;" and thus it will be found, that whenever any gift of the Spirit is mentioned in the Scripture, it may be referred to one of the three heads of power, wisdom, or holiness; power, not in the sense of authority, which, indeed, is a confusion, but in that true and proper sense of some real faculty or superiority, whether physical, intellectual, or moral, which confers authority on him who possesses it. And so far, indeed, I agree with Hooker, for I believe *that Christ gave his disciples authority, because he gave them power.*

to signify the gifts of the Holy Spirit, or the graces, it always signifies something visible and manifest, a seal of God's presence, whether the particular attribute which it declared was his power or his holiness. "We are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise;" this was true of the Apostles, and of those on whom they conferred their gifts, in a twofold sense; they had the seal of the spirit of power, and wisdom, and also of the spirit of holiness. It is of the very essence of a seal, to be manifest; for a seal is a witness, and a witness not forthcoming to give his evidence, is no witness at all. Whatever gift, therefore, or grace of the Holy Spirit, Christ conferred on his Apostles, when he said to them, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost," we may be well assured that it was not "an authority," as Hooker calls it, but a pledge and seal of authority; wisdom, or power, or holiness, so manifest in them, that when they spoke in the name of God, their warrant might be ever at hand to show that they did not speak falsely. And it is the actual possession of this pledge and seal by the Apostles, which makes the great difference between their authority and ours.

The seal of the Holy Ghost was the Apostle's warrant, both in speaking to the heathen, and in laying down rules for the practice of Christians. But we, not speaking from ourselves, but merely repeating, as it were, their words, do not need this seal. If we were to speak any new thing concerning God, then the seal would be needed; our not having it seems to prove the truth of that well known assertion of our church, that all things necessary to salvation are to be found in the Scriptures alone.

But over and above the warrant given by the Holy

Spirit to the general truths declared, or rules laid down by the Apostles, the same divine seal appears to have been sometimes given to their dealings with individuals; it was shown that they, like their Master, had power on earth to forgive sins, even in individual cases, because the outward and visible healing of bodily disease gave assurance that their sentence, even with regard to moral disease, was pronounced truly. I am not aware that the question of the apostolical miracles has been fully considered in this point of view; nor have we, perhaps, facts enough before us to enable us thoroughly to understand it. But I think it does not appear that they ever exercised the right of priestly absolution towards an individual Christian after baptism, without conveying it, if I may so speak, through the sign of a miraculous cure, or of the recall of a sentence of miraculous punishment. And in the latter case, as the offence which was so visited would generally be visited also by the censures of the church, the priestly power of bestowing forgiveness in the sight of God was mixed up with the power of government, shown in the remission of the punishment inflicted by society. It is said of St. Paul at Lystra, that he stedfastly beheld the cripple, and perceived that he had faith to be healed; and then accordingly he healed him. I suppose that here, as in our Lord's miracles, St. Paul might, without impropriety, have said to the cripple, "Thy sins are forgiven thee," as well as, "Stand upright on thy feet." And the cure was a seal of the man's forgiveness in the sight of God, that at that time he was as completely justified as a convert who had just received remission of his sins in baptism.

Now this especial gift of healing or inflicting disease,

which was the certain warrant that the Apostles, even in individual cases, and without reference to church censures, could forgive or retain the sins of a man in the sight of God, is not vouchsafed to the ministers of the church now. Nor have we that gift of looking into the hearts of men, which could enable us certainly to pronounce of any one whether he had or had not faith to be healed. It does not appear that we have any other means of judging of this, than what may arise from the blessing of God upon our natural faculties, and the amount, not of the gifts, but of the graces, which we may have received from the Holy Ghost. And, therefore, the words of our Lord to his Apostles, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost," must necessarily, when addressed by the Bishop to any man now ordained minister, be interpreted in the first place as a prayer, or a charitable hope, rather than as signifying the actual and certain conveyance of any gift or grace at that very time, and by the virtue of the laying on of hands; and secondly, when the hope thus expressed is most really fulfilled, and when God's Spirit does bless the act of ordination to him who receives it; yet the blessings which he bestows are not the same in kind with some of those conferred on the Apostles, nor the same in degree with others. And the gifts which are not given to us, are precisely those which alone could warrant a priestly power; those which are given are abundantly sufficient for the duties of a minister.

The manner in which the Ordination Service is spoken of in the thirty-sixth Article of our Church, is worthy of observation. It is declared that the service contains nothing "that *of itself* is superstitious and ungodly." This seems to imply, that it did contain something

which, if misinterpreted, might easily be made out to be superstitious and ungodly. But no part of it, even if misinterpreted, seems liable to this charge, except the quotation of our Lord's words, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." These words undoubtedly would be "superstitious and ungodly" in our mouths, if the well known sentiments of the Church of England, that is, of the reformers of Edward the Sixth's reign, as to the priestly power, did not lead us, in fairness, to put a true construction on them. And this construction seems to be the following. The Bishop says to the candidate for orders, "You have expressed your hope that you were moved by the Holy Ghost to enter on this ministry. We are confident that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it to the end; that as He has given you the will, so also will He give you the power to do. May His help and blessing be with you, that by wisdom and goodness you may show yourself a true minister of Christ. Your office is to preach God's Word. Whosoever listens to your preaching, God will justify; and whoever despises it, him will God condemn." Now the notorious fact, that to a very great number of ministers so ordained the blessing of the Holy Spirit is clearly given, so that they both save themselves, and many of those who hear them, is a clear proof that this is *a* lawful ordination, and that ministers so ordained are true ministers of Christ. The equally notorious fact that, to a very great number so ordained, the spirit of wisdom and holiness has *not* been given, and that it *has* been given to a great number of ministers *not* so ordained, is no less a proof that it is not *the only* lawful ordination, and that ministers ordained differently are true ministers of Christ, as well as ours.

Thus an extraordinary power in the Apostles was warranted by extraordinary gifts; and as those extraordinary gifts are not now bestowed, the reasonable conclusion is, that the extraordinary power has ceased also. There remains the ordinary power of teaching and of government, with such peculiarities in addition as arise from the peculiar character and sanctions with which the doctrine taught by us was originally invested: that is, when we proclaim the Gospel promises and the Gospel principles of life, the divine sanction originally given to them accompanies in like manner our re-delivery of them; nor can we insist too strongly on that divine authority which warrants us in making Christian holiness the only true standard of duty. But in doubtful disputations and strifes of words, where both parties appeal alike to the authority of the Apostles, we have no infallible power of deciding between them; and in the sentence to be pronounced upon an individual, in the degree of encouragement or fear to be ministered to him, we have no guide but the general instruction of the Scriptures on the one hand, and our own individual ability and experience on the other.

The conclusion is, that the Christian ministry, divested of all claims to priestly power, retains a real and practical virtue of its own. Whether it be considered as an institution for teaching or for governing, it comes forward on the basis of divine knowledge; and if it improves the means which it possesses, its voice has a moral superiority over every other system in the world, because on every point relating to man's moral being it may work out truth with infinite advantage, from possessing in the Christian Scriptures the key to all moral knowledge.

But such a ministry, with a great moral power derived from apostolical teaching through the Scriptures, is wholly independent of any pretended apostolical succession. The notion of the "succession" is connected with that of the priesthood; it was a device to imitate the natural hereditary descent of the old priesthoods by a succession of adoptions; an insufficient expedient, and intended to effect a superstitious end. Undoubtedly, if the gifts of the Apostles had been transmissible, the succession would have been a valid reality; but their gifts were inherited by no one, their knowledge and their graces, though in an inferior degree, became possessed by the whole body of the church; the clergy, in the second generation after the Apostles, had no essential superiority over other men; and thus none being specially marked out by God, either as teachers or governors, the church enjoyed the common right of all societies, that of appointing its officers by its own laws. And as the abstract church or Christian society is divided into a great number of particular churches, each having its own laws, in all matters not already provided for by the common divine law of the Scriptures, so each church may appoint its own ministers, whether teachers or governors, in such a manner, and with such powers, as it shall judge convenient. And all ministers so appointed, under whatever different titles, and with whatever different powers, if they teach the same Gospel which the Apostles taught, and govern Christian people after the principles of Christ's law, they are the true and only successors of the Apostles, just as the children of Abraham's faith, not the children of his body, were the true and only heirs of the promises made to him.

It is with the clergy, in short, as with kings, and for the very same reason. The old notion of the divine right of kings, meaning thereby that they derived their power from God immediately, and were subject to no control of human law, was a superstition only, and injurious to all good government. But had kings, according to the old Greek notion, been of a higher race than other men, and superior to them intellectually and morally, then it would have been no longer superstitious, but reasonable. Still, however, though the divine right of kings, in this sense, is a superstition, yet in another sense it is a wholesome truth. Kings reigning by law, and with powers given and limited by law, have indeed a divine right to govern; and the individual who resists the power, does truly resist the ordinance of God. So the divine right of the clergy, if grounded on their apostolical succession, is a mischievous superstition, yet as ministers appointed by law, with functions and powers regulated by law, they are truly the ministers of Christ, and do their ministerial work by divine authority.

Thus the decision of the question of a priesthood decides nothing positively as to the nature of church government, but overthrows the claim of any one form to be necessarily received as by divine commandment. It restores to LAW its proper sovereignty over all questions of government, which being essentially indefinite, and requiring a different solution under different circumstances, are fitly left to the control of a power at once liberal and decisive; a power which, duly blending authority with freedom, rules the actions of men without enslaving their minds; leaving to its subjects the just alternative of prevailing on it by the force of

reason to modify its decrees, or else, of implicitly submitting[a] to them.

Such is the method in which LAW deals with mankind, because it is itself the fruit of no more than human wisdom. GOD's commands are of a different nature, claiming of his creatures *only* implicit obedience. They relate to principles eternal and unchangeable, which are to last through the world's existence. And under the Christian dispensation they relate to these only; nothing formal, ritual, or ceremonial is perpetually binding upon Christians, by the command of God. For this reason the Mosaic law was done away; not, as some believe, to substitute another ceremonial in its stead; but to show that all ceremonies were from henceforth to take their proper place, as things indifferent, variable, changeable; changeable, and therefore subject not to the caprice of individuals, but to that power which has the dominion over changeable things; namely, human law.

To this essential character of Christianity, superstition is directly opposed. She labours to make forms and ceremonies indispensable, and therefore pleads for them the sanction of God's authority. So she pleaded for the necessity of circumcision, by the mouth of the Judaizers of old; so she has pleaded and pleads for the necessity of a priesthood and an apostolical succession, by the mouths of the less excusable Judaizers of later times. And St. Paul's conduct and language in dealing with the zealots of circumcision, as preserved to us in the Epistle to the Galatians, ought for ever to have silenced the pretensions of the zealots for a priesthood.

[a] Πείθειν ἢ πείθεσθαι. See the Crito of Plato.

But granting that all this notion of a priesthood, and of the power of the keys, and of apostolical succession, be an error; still is it not an amiable and an innocent one? Does it not encourage those feelings of reverence and humility which are undoubtedly moral qualities of the highest order, and which the tendency of our times is daily striving to diminish? It encourages them as idolatry encourages piety; that is, it first corrupts and degrades them, and then endangers their utter destruction, by provoking the opposite feelings of human nature to a tremendous reaction. No other cause has so prevented the real triumph of Christ's Gospel in those countries where it has been nominally received, as the distinction so early drawn between the clergy and laity. Amongst the Roman Catholics, the very name of "the Church," has been appropriated to the clergy; Christians are divided into "the Church," and "the Faithful;" the true πόλις and δῆμος of the oldest Greek commonwealths, where all the rights of citizens, even to the very name, were monopolized by the aristocracy, who boasted their heroic succession, while the rest of the population were, in fact, strangers and subjects. Thence followed the division of the, so called, temporal and spiritual powers, a division fraught with mischief, and separating those attributes of wisdom and power, which it is the perfection of government to unite on earth, no less than in heaven. The papacy strove to unite them, and in that it did well; but it ruined its work by attaching to its notion of spiritual power, the superstition of apostolical succession, and by thus introducing a fanatical and anarchical principle, destructive of all good and free government. At the reformation in England, the temporal and spiritual

powers were united on a truer basis, by being vested in the lawful head[a] of the Christian commonwealth; deriving his power, not from any fancied apostolical succession, but from the laws of the realm. But the actual tyranny of the crown, the power and profligacy of the nobility, and the equal superstition of the High-church party and the Puritans, each advancing the claims of the Christian ministry as a priesthood, though differing in the details, has again produced a separation of these powers, to the infinite injury of both; the tem-

[a] I think it right to insert the famous act which conferred the supremacy on Henry VIII. It will be seen that it distinctly confers a power to control doctrine, and every sort of *spiritual* jurisdiction which had ever been exercised in Christ's church; and this, not for the mere good order of the commonwealth, but with respect to the "pleasure of Almighty God," and "the increase of virtue in Christ's religion."

"The king's grace to be authorized supreme head.

"Albeit the king's majesty justly and rightfully is, and ought to be, the supreme head of the Church of England; and so is recognized by the clergy of this realm in their convocations; yet, nevertheless, for corroboration and confirmation thereof, and for increase of virtue in Christ's religion within this realm of England, and to repress and extirp all errors, heresies, and other enormities and abuses heretofore used in the same: Be it enacted by authority of this present parliament, that the king, our sovereign lord, his heirs and successors, kings of this realm, shall be taken, accepted, and reputed, the only supreme head in earth, of the Church of England, called Anglicana Ecclesia, and shall have and enjoy, annexed and united to the imperial crown of this realm, as well the title and style thereof, as all honours, dignities, pre-eminences, jurisdictions, privileges, authorities, immunities, profits, and commodities, to the said dignity of supreme head of the same church belonging and appertaining; and that our said sovereign lord, his heirs and successors, kings of this realm, shall have full power and authority, from time to time, to visit, repress, redress, reform, order, correct, restrain, and amend all such errors, heresies, abuses, offences, contempts, and enormities, whatsoever they be, which by any manner, spiritual authority, or jurisdiction, ought, or may lawfully be reformed, repressed, ordered, redressed, corrected, restrained, or amended, most to the pleasure of Almighty God, the increase of virtue in Christ's religion, and for the conservation of the peace, unity, and tranquillity of this realm; any usage, custom, foreign laws, foreign authority, prescription, or any other thing or things to the contrary hereof notwithstanding."—26 *Henry VIII.* ch. 1.

poral power has almost ceased to consider itself as ministering in the church of Christ, while the spiritual power being held up by its pretended advocates as inseparably united with the apostolical succession, has been for that very reason reduced to a cypher, because the common sense of Christians, and of enlightened men, has abhorred the notion of a priestly government.

From this same fruitful source of evil has arisen the distinction between church and state in a Christian country[a], and all the idle questions as to their respective

[a] Hence have arisen the clamours against a religion enjoined by Act of Parliament; as if the supreme authority of parliament implied an usurpation of the power of the Church by the State; whereas it implies merely the sovereignty of the Church, as opposed to the usurpation of the clergy. On this subject I cannot do better than quote the words of Speaker Onslow, as given in one of his Notes on Burnet's History of his own Times. [Vol. IV. p. 17. Oxford Edition, 1833.]

"By the constitution of the Church of England it is, that the supreme legislative power of the Church is in King, Lords, and Commons, in parliament. And it is the same with regard to the king's supremacy, whose ecclesiastical jurisdiction and authority is an essential part of our church constitution, renewed and confirmed by parliament, as the supreme legislature of the Church, which has the same extent of true power in the Church of England, as any church legislature ever had; and may, therefore, censure, excommunicate, deprive, degrade, &c.; or may give authoritative directions to the officers of the Church to perform any of them; and may also make laws and canons to bind the whole Church, as they shall judge proper, not repugnant to the laws of God or nature. Nay, the laity in England cannot otherwise be bound, but by parliament, who have a right (when they think proper) to the advice and assistance of the Convocations, or the true parliamentary meetings of the clergy, by the *præmunientes* clause in the parliamentary writs to the bishops, if the one, or the other, or both, should be then assembled. The last has been long disused. (See the Journal of the House of Commons, of the 13th and 16th of April, 1689; 1st of March, 1710, 1712, 1713.) The legislature of the primitive church was in the whole body, and afterwards had many variations in its constituents, and may still vary with the consent of the several communities. If this distinction of legislature in the parliament be true, (and I am not the first who has mentioned it,) the Church of England is freed from the imputation of being a creature *only* of the State, which, by some sects of Christians, has been often and much objected to. . . . . The Convocation can, by their canons, bind only their own body. They are in the

supremacy, and the nature of the pretended alliance between them. These disputes have all originated in

nature of by-laws; and this is now fully settled by a solemn determination in the King's Bench, made in my Lord Hardwick's time there."— So far Speaker Onslow, delivering, as might be supposed, from his acquaintance with our constitution, a most correct view of the doctrine of the Church of England, with respect to its government. But the Oxford editor adds the following remarks on Speaker Onslow's Note:—"What is here asserted respecting the right of the legislature to excommunicate the members of the Church, and to degrade its clergy, or to command the officers of the Church to do this, is not considered by the Church itself to be compatible with the powers given by our Saviour to those officers. It was not pretended that the bishops who were deprived after the Revolution, were degraded from their orders, (if that is meant by the term degrading,) or ceased to be bishops, although deprived of their bishoprics." This editor well exemplifies what I have said of the sad effects of the superstition of the priesthood. Speaker Onslow had stated the doctrine of the Church of England, as declared by its supreme legislature, and sanctioned by its laws; to which the editor answers by giving the opinion of the *clergy*, or rather of some of them, as the opinion of the *Church;* as if the "by-laws" of their convocations and synods were the laws of the Church. The laws of the Church are such only as are binding on the Church: the Articles and Liturgy have the authority of the Church, because its own supreme legislature, parliament, has enacted them; but it is not so with the canons, and of course still less so with the opinions of individual clergymen, be they who they may. And in what the editor goes on to say of "the powers given by our Saviour to these officers," and of the indefeasible nature of their character, he shows how the notion of the apostolical succession grows out of the superstition of a priesthood, in the worst sense of the word. If he holds the Christian minister to be a priest, as the Roman Catholics do, and orders to be a sacrament, as they also hold, then he may consistently, though erroneously and superstitiously, think with them, that the character impressed by the rite of ordination is something distinct from the office, and indelible. But those who think with the Church of England, that the Christian ministry is not a priesthood, nor orders a sacrament, they will find some difficulty in understanding how a man can be a lawful minister, after the law of the Church has deprived him of his ministerial office.

There is, however, one important point to observe, that the whole constitution of our Church will be utterly confounded if Jews, or any other avowed unbelievers in Christ, are admitted into the legislature. For then parliament cannot be the legislature of the Church, not being an assembly of Christians: and as there is no other church legislature to be found under our actual constitution, the government of the Church will be *de jure* extinct, and its members will have to form a new one for themselves.

the false supposition that the clergy are a priesthood; and that, as such, they have a perpetual right to govern the church, and to recruit their own numbers by their own nominations. Thus the church government being removed from the control of the ordinary principles of political society, by which every government should be regulated, unless it can plead some perpetual miraculous evidence in favour of its exemption, was necessarily distinguished from the State, lest the principles of political society should be sacrificed altogether; and for the same reason, when separated, was reduced also to complete subjection, lest the inherent vice of its pretended constitution should disorganize and corrupt all the civil relations of mankind.

But the worst evil of all superstition is its sure tendency to ungodliness. The clergy, for their own power's sake, made themselves identical with the church; and the laity in like manner, for their own vices' sake, gladly adopted this language, that so they might regard Christ's stricter commands as addressed to the clergy only, and not to them. The clergy claimed to be the governors of the church; and the laity thus reduced to the condition of subjects, instead of citizens, maintained the great cause of the church rather with a subject's indifference, than with a citizen's zeal. The clergy too, aware that the distinction between them and the laity was not a real and moral one, nor had any tendency to promote goodness, were led in other matters also, to insist on the importance of things morally unimportant; and then with the perverse compensation of error, bestowed less time and attention on the great moral evils of society, which it was their especial business to combat.

And thus, at this moment, when Christ's kingdom so greatly needs the efforts of all Christ's servants, its cause is sacrificed by profane indifference on the one hand, and a no less profane superstition on the other. One party are anxious to unchristianize the nation; the other seem trying to make Christianity appear of little value, by representing as essential to it, matters of form or of opinion, which either impair, or at least are wholly foreign to its excellence. True it is, that this last labour is utterly vain; the notion of the apostolical succession will never become prevalent; but it may destroy for an indefinite time, and to an indefinite extent, all likelihood of the triumph of apostolical Christianity. I have no fears of priestcraft in itself, but I dread it for its inevitable recoil; I dread it as essentially destructive; destructive of the spirit of Christianity during the period of its triumph; and threatening now to destroy alike the spirit and the profession of the Gospel, by declaring that it cannot be put down itself, without involving the holiest things in its ruin.

One word more in conclusion. There are some who consider theoretical truth to be of little value unless it be used to enforce some practical result; and they may ask, what is the practical result aimed at in the foregoing pages. I might answer, first, that in establishing a great principle of truth, it is not necessary to look to any one particular and immediate result; because all moral truth is sure to be wanted sooner or later in the varying circumstances of the world, and general truth is not best discovered when sought under the need for its particular application. But in truth, the High-church notions of a priesthood, are, as I think, anarchical, uncharitable, and so multiplying divisions, and greatly

encouraging to the growth of Roman Catholic errors. This last is a sufficiently practical evil. It is said that Roman Catholics are daily becoming more numerous amongst us, and the efforts of their priests to make converts, more assiduous. Now the doctrine of apostolical succession leads directly to one of the two fundamental errors on which their system is based; for the succession, if real, must be intended to keep up a line either of priests, or of governors. If it be the former, and the Christian ministry be made a priesthood, then we have all those profane invasions of Christ's mediatorial office with which the Romish system abounds: man forgiving the sins of man; man offering sacrifice for man; and man interposed as a necessary link between his brethren and God. But if it be pretended that the apostolical succession was designed to perpetuate, not a priesthood, but a form of church government, then we have the Romish notion of the unity of the church, of the supremacy of general councils, and of the independence of the clergy. For, if bishops and presbyters, nominating the members of their own body, be appointed by God to govern his church, all political divisions among Christians must be merely subordinate; and the kings and parliaments of Christian countries must govern only by the permission, and subject to the sovereign control, of the true rulers of the church, the bishops and clergy: in which case, the comparison of Innocent III. becomes just and reasonable; that kings and temporal princes are but the lesser light that rules the night, while the apostles' successors, the bishops and clergy, are the greater light that rules the day, from which the other derives its brightness. This is the

doctrine against which the Church of England protests [a] so strongly, and from which the king's supremacy has so happily delivered us. But this is the doctrine to which the pretended apostolical succession directly leads; for with a ministry such as that of the Church of England, the notion of the succession is absurd; our clergy are neither priests nor governors; and if there be no divinely appointed succession for our kings and parliaments, who are the only supreme governors of the church, it is impossible to suppose that such a succession can exist in the case of the clergy, who are subordinate ministers, with no independent power in the church whatever. And, therefore, they who insist the most on this pretended succession, are really desirous to overthrow our actual church constitution, and to make the clergy either priests, or governors, or both. They complain loudly of the tyranny of the state over the church; in other words, of those wholesome laws by which the church put down the usurpations of the clergy; and they long for the Roman Catholic system of government, substituting only, according to the doctrine of the Council of Constance, the supremacy of a general council for that of the bishop of Rome. It is

[a] It is needless to refer to the well-known declarations of the king's supremacy; but it may not be superfluous to notice the language of the twenty-first Article respecting General Councils: "General Councils may not be gathered together without the commandment and will of princes." For this effectually asserts the supremacy of Christian governors all over the world over Christian ministers; thus distinctly denying that the government of the church is conveyed by the so called apostolical succession, inasmuch as the persons claiming to have this succession can only legislate for the church, with the permission, and at the command, of persons who do not claim to have it, and yet are members of the church, and rulers in it, and of it.

said that the Catholics are reviving the old story of the Nag's Head consecration, in order to impugn the validity of our ordinations. Now it seems to me, that any man who believes that their validity would be shaken, if that story could be proved to be true, so far from being able to answer Roman Catholic arguments, is quite fit to be a Roman Catholic himself. Our ordinations are valid, because we preach Christ's Gospel, and are appointed to our work by the law of our church; and he who seeks another warrant for them, injures the cause of Protestantism far more than he can possibly serve it by establishing the fact of the regularity of the succession [a].

[a] In the foregoing pages, I have spoken of the error of the notions which I have been combating, as superstitious and mischievous; as entitled to no respect, either intellectually or morally. An error which has been itself so intolerant of truth, as well as so extensively injurious, must be opposed in plain and strong language; we must not plead for the truth as defensively, but assail the corruption which oppresses it. But I wish to make the widest difference between the error and the individuals who hold it. Had I been arguing against any one or more individuals, and not against an erroneous opinion in the abstract, the tone of my language would have been different; because in them, along with the opinion, which is merely bad, there would probably be other opinions merely good, together with many qualities, both intellectual and moral, which would claim, in a high degree, respect and love.

APPENDIX TO SERMON XVIII.

It is assumed in this Sermon, that the tendency of atheism is towards practical wickedness. With regard to atheism in its common form actually, the truth of the assumption is self-evident; for the object of vulgar atheists is simply to take off a restraint upon the indulgence of our passions; and that the release from this restraint would involve a very great demoralization, is too plain to require proof. But, taking any purer or conceivable form of atheism, and admitting that its advocates mean by virtue and vice what we commonly mean by these terms, and that they have no intention or wish to discourage virtue and favour vice, yet, still I think it may be shown that their system has this tendency, and that, compared with Christianity as a moral engine, it is so greatly inferior, as to make its propagation, in the face of Christianity already existing, an act positively immoral.

The proof of this position appears to me to lie in this fact, that no conceivable sanction to be discovered, on a system of proper atheism, is reconcilable with some of the principal ideas expressed by the word "virtue:" in other words, that on a system of proper atheism, we cannot attach their usual meaning to the terms "obligation" and "duty;" and being thus obliged to divest the notion of virtue of its most characteristic elements, we make it synonymous with good taste or

with expediency, and substitute in the place of the perfect notion, another notion, imperfect and of a far lower kind, inasmuch as it retains only some of the less valuable elements of the entire compound.

A system of atheism may be said to offer three sanctions of moral conduct; viz. 1st, The law of nature, or the fitness of things; 2d, The law of our own consciences speaking within us; and 3d, The law of other men's judgments, whether written or unwritten. It does not matter for the present, whether we suppose virtue to consist in the love of abstract goodness and excellence (Aristotle's τὸ καλὸν), or in the practice of what is most expedient for the welfare of mankind. Whether it be the one or the other, the question is, why, under a system of atheism, are we bound to seek after it? and the law which binds us to do so, must be either the law of nature, or of our conscience, or of other men's judgments.

I use these terms as I find them, and as they are often used. But, I think, that on a system of atheism, the law of nature and the law of conscience are expressions which involve a fallacy: the first, because nature, setting aside God, contains nothing capable of binding morally; the second, because it is an abuse of language to talk of a man's being bound to himself.

1. "Nature, setting aside God, contains nothing capable of binding morally." It is possible that "the law of nature" may be so interpreted as to become merely another name for God. A constitution of things favouring virtue and discouraging vice, and requiring men, as parts of the great whole, to act in conformity with it, and to support its tendencies, is little more

than the strong recoil of anthropomorphism[a]. Men feeling the grossness of anthropomorphic notions of the Divine Being, and following up rigorously the notion of God's omnipresence, have thus run into a denial of his personality, or pantheism. And though pantheistic doctrines have an injurious moral tendency, inasmuch as by removing all the analogies which might help us to conceive of our relations to God, they cannot but destroy religious affections: yet still they are but an awkward and obscure expression of the truth, and by no means a denial of it. They make the course of things to be a matter of order, not of accident; and by fur-

[a] Traces of this feeling are to be found in a most excellent work, written by a most sincere Christian; I mean, "The Corner Stone," by Mr. Abbott, of New England. The writer is so anxious to repel the anthropomorphic notion of "a monarch on a throne of marble and gold, with crown and sceptre, and sitting in a fancied region which we call heaven," that he ventures to describe God as "the all-pervading Power, which lives and acts throughout the whole universe. He is not a separate existence, having a special habitation in a part of it." He is the "invisible and universal *Power*, pervading all space and existing in all time." Now these descriptions, however true in themselves, are yet likely, I think, to produce an untrue impression, by dwelling so much upon the difference between God's personality and ours, and by so representing him as immaterial, that the language makes him appear, at the same time, almost impersonal. What Mr. Abbott denies, he denies truly; but when, not content with negative truth concerning God as he is in himself, we wish to arrive at something positive; then the imperfections of our conceptions and of our language lead us immediately into error. And this is the explanation of most of the erroneous opinions which have been entertained concerning the Divine nature. The Sabellian was right in denying Tritheism; and the Arian was right in protesting against the confusion of the notion of the Son of God with that of the Father; but both fell themselves into error when they attempted to substitute positive notions of their own in the room of the opposite notions which they condemned. And I cannot but think that the positive notions of the Unitarians as to the unity and personality of God, as if his nature, in these respects, was perfectly comprehensible, have been one main cause of their rejecting the scriptural revelation of the divinity of Christ.

nishing a superhuman archetype of virtue in the tendencies of nature, they seem in theory, whatever may have been the case in practice, to provide a sanction for man's actions existing out of himself, and to offer him a standard to which he is morally bound to conform his being. But, on a strict system of atheism, there is no constitution of things, and the universe is not a whole, but a multitude. All actual results are accidents, arising from the mutual action of an infinity of individual tendencies, which, sometimes aiding, and sometimes neutralizing or qualifying one another, produce that infinite variety of powers and effects which we witness. It is vain to seek for a moral sanction under such a state of things as this. Every individual being is a law to itself, or rather acts from its own distinct impulses or appetites, without reference to any other being. And whether we suppose that in man's case these appetites are irresistible, so that he is a necessary agent, or that he has a will, and is free to comply with them or no; yet even his will can find no authority out of itself to which it is responsible, and therefore the law of nature, on an atheistic system, can only mean the tendency of each individual's nature, or, in other words, that each man is his own law.

2. The first supposed sanction of atheism resolves itself, therefore, into the second; the law of our own consciences speaking within us. Now, in examining this second sanction, we find a difficulty, both in our common language, and in the actual phenomena of the case themselves. For there is no doubt that the term "conscience," does imply a really binding sanction; and it is equally certain that we feel within us the obligation to obey it. But then this very fact is an evi-

dence that God is; for on this supposition the feeling may be justified, and is highly reasonable, but on the supposition of atheism it is an anomaly[a]. For it is manifest that the same being cannot at once bind and be bound: if the conscience and the will be alike original in man's nature, and derive nothing from without, the decision of the one must needs be in harmony with the choice of the other. For the man being thus his own law, the will is the sole standard to which the conscience can refer; so that what the will resolves, the conscience cannot but approve. That the fact is otherwise, and that the conscience can, and often does, condemn the choice of the will, is a proof that man is not his own law, and that conscience speaks another language than his own. Conscience, in truth, is God's ambassador, sent to reside in the human heart, and speaks the language, not of the nature in which she is dwelling for the time, but of that Divine nature from which she derives her being and her authority.

3. The remaining conceivable sanction, under a system of atheism, is to be found in the judgments of other men. But here again this very system makes it difficult to arrive at such a sanction. For if the universe be but a multitude of individuals, each obeying, whether necessarily or from choice, the instincts of his own nature, what moral right can any of these have over each other? The language of barbarian independence would then cease to be blameable, and a man might say that he was born for himself, and was bound to obey no laws but those of his own making. Or supposing that nature, too strong for the false doctrines that would pervert it, compelled us to feel our obligations to the civil society

[a] See Warburton's Divine Legation, Book I. sect. 4.

of which we were members; supposing that we acknowledged the right of our country to claim our services, and thus supplied to our minds that notion of duty and obligation, which, as far as regarded any superhuman power, we had renounced altogether; supposing that we have thus escaped from the utter selfishness of our atheistic system, and learning to conceive of self-devotion, can thus conceive in part of virtue; yet, still, how can we ever develope the idea worthily? If our country's interests are to be served by falsehood, by injustice, by atrocious cruelty, how can we discover that it is not our duty so to serve them? "There are some acts so foul," says Cicero, "that no good man would ever commit them, even to save his country from ruin." We feel the truth of this doctrine, and, on a system of theism, or even of pantheism, its reasonableness is evident. But how can it be maintained on a system of atheism? To whom, out of himself, can a man be bound on such a system, more strongly than to his country? And if he pleads that falsehood or cruelty are degrading to his own nature, and that he cannot pollute himself by their commission; this language, which, in the mouth of a theist, is pure virtue, becomes, when used by an atheist, no better than selfish niceness. Zopyrus was honoured as a hero, when, for his king's glory, he marred and mangled the beauty of his own outward form; and is he not much more a hero, who, for the same cause, mars and mangles a yet more precious part of his nature, and sacrifices the purity, and the beauty, and the dignity of his own mind? Are not the very notions of virtue and vice confounded, when vice is made to assume the form of self-devotion, and

virtue can only maintain her ground by adopting the language of selfishness?

But it may be asked, perhaps, how, under any system, we are to arrive at the notion of obligation? Do we derive it from the power of God, so that our only notion of virtue is "that which God commands;" and are we obliged to do it because he is all-powerful? It is evident that this would be a very incomplete explanation of the phenomenon; it would not, in fact, account for the notion of *moral* obligation at all. Nor does it appear a full explanation of the case, to refer all obligation immediately to the will of God: as if the notion of God added at once to our admiration and love of virtue the sense of our obligation to practise it. For still there would remain this question, How can the notion of obligation [a] be explained by the mere fact of the existence of the Divine will?

And here seems the proper place to remark on the mischief of pushing too far our notion of God's personality. Our ideas of personality are so inevitably

[a] Warburton repeats several times that obligation arises from the will of a superior, but he does not sufficiently explain his meaning; and sometimes he appears to confuse external or physical obligation, *i. e.* the obligation arising from power, with *moral* obligation, arising from a sense of right and wrong. Nor will our relation to God as our Maker explain the origin of obligation; for that relation can only create a moral fitness that we should obey him; and the very point required is to know how we arrive at the idea of obligation over and above that of moral fitness. So that it seems to me, that we can get no farther than to this statement: That the sense of obligation is an elementary fact in human nature; that a system of atheism, if established, would make this sense as chimerical and false as the impressions of a dream; but that a belief in God establishes it as true, although we cannot altogether explain it, and further, that such a belief reconciles us to this assumption of faith without full knowledge, as it teaches us that such a knowledge does exist actually in God, and may be hereafter imparted to us also.

borrowed from our own nature, that when applied to God, they have a tendency, like all other positive notions respecting him, to lead to error, unless carefully watched. It seems to have been from this cause that men have been afraid to represent good as existing apart from God's will, because, according to our notions of personality, it would lead, on one side or the other, to shocking conclusions; and would appear to represent God as having a pattern in some sort before him, independent of himself, to which his will conformed itself. Similar difficulties occur whenever we attempt to subject to our inquiry any of the points of the Divine nature. But essential as the notion of will is to personality, as we commonly conceive it, yet as applied to God, we may only adapt it relatively to ourselves: we may speak of God's will with respect to his creatures, but not with respect to himself, as choosing any thing or refusing. We cannot pretend to inquire into the relations of the Divine nature except towards its own works. And here we can conceive of Him as of our Creator, and the Creator of the universe, as having implanted in our minds notions of truth, and justice, and excellence, and goodness; and impressed us farther with a sense of the obligation of following after them. The sense of obligation is a fact [a], and its being implanted in us by Him who is at

[a] In recognizing the common feelings of the mind as the facts on which all metaphysical reasoning should be grounded, and in arguing upwards from these facts, instead of setting out with an attempt to discover the sources of all our ideas, and then proceeding to pass judgment upon our several feelings and notions according to the apparent nature of their supposed sources, the metaphysical works of M. Cousin appear to me to follow the only true method of inquiry. In all respects, they afford a splendid proof of the improvement which has taken place in French literature as compared with its state during the eighteenth century. What

once our Maker, and perfect in wisdom and goodness, justifies the existence of the fact. It is not then that all our notion of obligation is derived originally or exclusively from the will of God; but that the notion of God as our Maker, and a being perfect in himself, satisfies us that the idea of obligation being implanted in us by Him whose authority is perfect, both absolutely and relatively, is to be received as a certain truth.

Here, then, as in so many other points besides, we must rest contented with imperfect knowledge. The notion of God does not explain *why* we are bound; does not entirely analyze to our minds the essence of obligation; but it satisfies us as to the fact that we *are* bound. And the notion of duty thus obtained and justified, the duty of making God's will our standard of action, flows naturally from our relations to him as his creatures, combined with his possessing all those attributes of moral goodness, which, as another fact in our nature, we are led irresistibly to love, admire, and, so far as we can, to imitate.

Farther, the notion of God as our Creator, not only satisfies us as to the reality of our moral impressions; such, for instance, as those of the obligation of virtue, the natural desirableness of truth and justice, &c.; but it holds out to us the prospect of having all the difficulties and obscurities of these impressions removed hereafter, in another state of being. For in presenting to us the idea of an all-wise and all-good Maker of this actual world, it provides us with a perfect object of confidence and faith; and while we compare the infi-

are Voltaire or Rousseau, or Montesquieu, in comparison with Cousin and Guizot?

nite wisdom of such a Being with the limited range of our own faculties, we are prepared to admit that what is in itself intelligible and satisfactory, may yet be beyond the grasp of our understandings; and while tranquillized for the present by the assurance that there is One to whom all mysteries are known, we are encouraged by the hope that we too may be raised hereafter by his goodness, to be, at least in a certain measure, partakers of his knowledge.

THE END.

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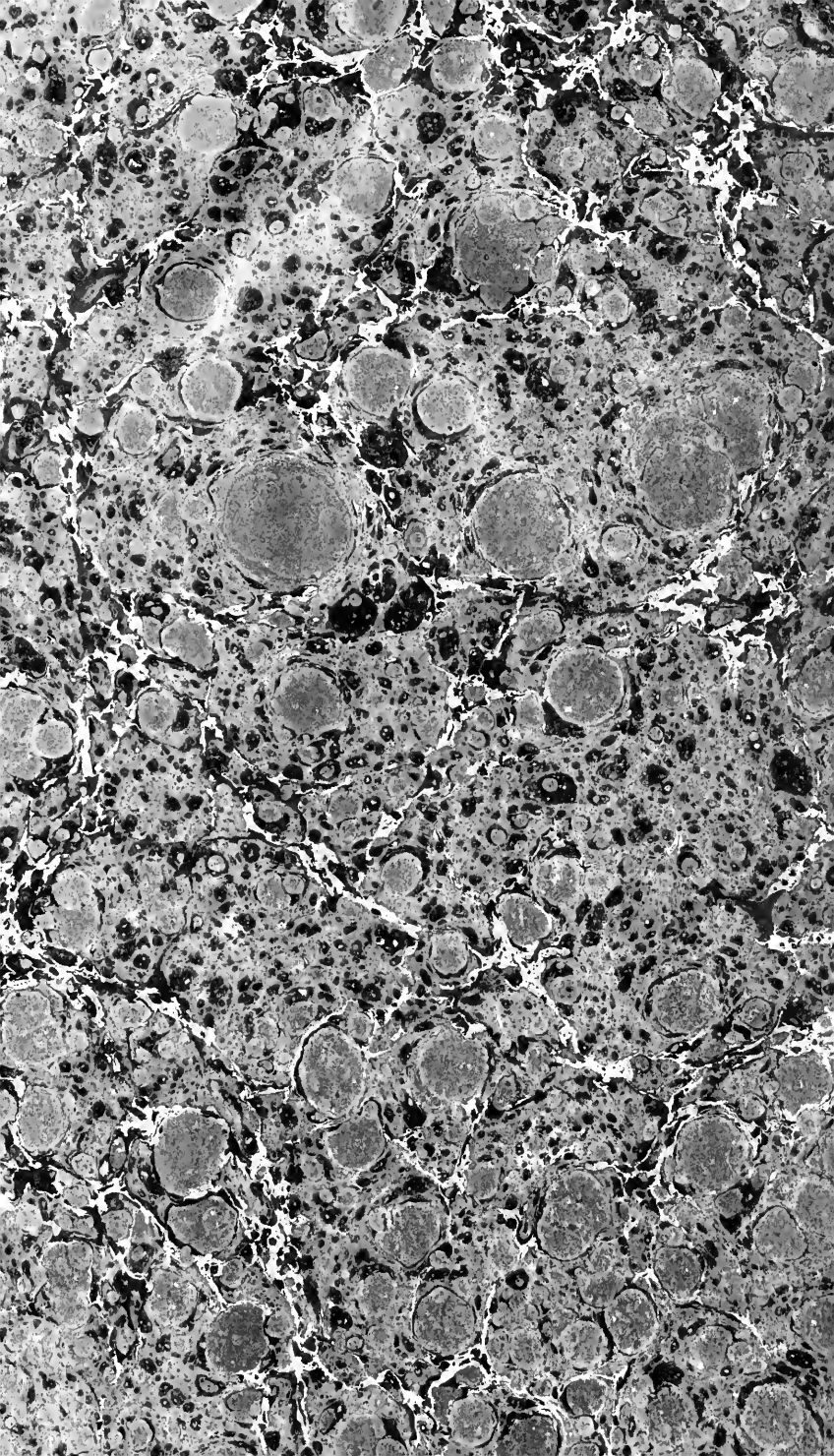

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